

## **Robert Wall**

**Private 29440, A Company, 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Highland Light Infantry**



**Robert Wall** was born in March 1898 in Maidenhead, Berkshire, the third child to Robert and Ellen (née Whyler) Wall. Robert's siblings are not known, as the 1911 Census states the family had three children, two living, but earlier entries do not record their names or date of birth. Robert (senior's) occupation was that of a domestic groom, probably serving the local gentry and Coaching Houses in Amersham, whilst Ellen's occupation is listed as a laundress. As a groom, his occupation led him to travel the country to find work. Born in Ellesmere, Shropshire, he met and married Ellen in Hackney, London, in Sept 1888. She was originally from Annesley, Nottinghamshire.

The 1901 Census shows the family (Robert aged 2 years) as living at Haydon Mill, Hartwell, Aylesbury before arriving in Amersham to live at Plantation Lodge, Amersham Common (1911 Census). At this time Robert (aged 13 years) was probably attending the Elementary School, Amersham Common. After schooling, it is most probable that Robert followed his father's occupation before enlisting. He was 17 when he enlisted in Watford, Hertfordshire in the autumn of 1915 and was posted to the Suffolk Regiment (Number 21160). However, after initial training he was transferred to the Highland Light Infantry.



'Plantation Lodge' Amersham Common (now in Raans Road), where Robert Wall and his family lived at the time of WW1

*Photograph taken in February 2014*

Based in Hampshire, the Battalion sailed from Southampton on 3 June 1916 and arrived at Le Havre the following day. From here they marched to Lillers and then on the following day to Ecquedecque, where they were billeted until 11 June. The Battalion marched from there to Béthune, close to Loos for their first taste of trench warfare. From 12 - 16 June the Battalion was in the trenches, where it is recorded that the weather was very bad and trenches were in bad condition - a severe test for new troops. The War Diaries state: "The men gave great satisfaction both in the manner they carried out any duties they were called upon to perform and also in their conduct under fire."

On the 16 June 1916 the Battalion was withdrawn to Annequin for relief before returning to the trenches on 20 June. The Battalion underwent further training with other Brigades, but on the evening of 21 June the 6<sup>th</sup> Camerons blew up a mine opposite to their section, and the 14<sup>th</sup> Highland Light Infantry (who were attached to the Battalion) were ordered to occupy the lip of the crater. This they did with few casualties and remained there until relieved and quit the trenches on 23 June. Again they withdrew to Annequin before marching to Bruay on 24 June, where further training was undertaken.

At the beginning of July the Battalion was in Les Brébis where, as part of the Brigade, they acted as the Divisional Reserve until 11 July. After this date they moved to Maroc where they were in the trenches (between 14 and 17 July) and supplied working parties employed to repair the Reserve Line and Communication Trenches and other defences. It is reported that "the wire appears to be very weak on this point." The line and wiring parties were working most of the night strengthening it. On the evening of 16 July (before their relief the following day) the War Diaries state: "The front was patrolled during the night. Nothing of importance was reported".

On the 22 July 1916 the Battalion moved to Calonne (between Bethane and Lens, close to Loos) and relieved the 18<sup>th</sup> Welsh Regiment, who were the Brigade support, and were billeted in Calonne. Working parties were immediately formed to improve the existing defences. "A" Company, Highland Light Infantry were to be relieved on 27 July by the 13<sup>th</sup> East Surrey Regiment on the front line in the afternoon, but came under attack from rifle grenades. Private Robert Wall, who was on sentry duty, was killed instantly, aged 18 years. He was awarded The Allied Victory Medal and The British War Medal, 1914-18.

Robert Wall is remembered with Honour and buried in  
Loos British Cemetery, Pas de Calais  
Grave Reference XVIII E.18

Robert Wall is also remembered on the Chesham Bois Scout Hut Memorial and St. Mary's Church Chesham War Memorial.

Sources:

The National Archives , Kew – War Office Records  
WO 95/2612 - *War Diary - Highland Light Infantry*  
WO 372 - *British Army WW1 Medal Rolls Index Cards 1914 – 1920.*  
*Bucks Examiner* Archive Records (Photograph Dec 1916)  
The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, Aylesbury.  
The Long, Long Trail ([www.1914-1918.net](http://www.1914-1918.net))