

Ernest Wingrove

Lance Corporal 374509, 2nd/8th Battalion, London Regiment (PO Rifles)

Frank Wingrove

Private G/10484, 13th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment



Photographs of Frank and Ernest Wingrove kindly provided by their great nephew Ken Wingrove, via Stephen Palmer and taken from the *Buckinghamshire Remembers* web-site.

Frank and Ernest Wingrove were brothers, both killed in action almost a year apart in France & Flanders during the First World War - Frank on 18 August 1916 and Ernest on 20 September 1917, aged 24 and 23 respectively. They were the sons of Albert and Eliza Wingrove of Royal Cottages, Winchmore Hill, Amersham, Buckinghamshire and both had originally enlisted in High Wycombe, Bucks. Surprisingly, or maybe not so surprising bearing in mind the total casualties overall, is a statistic concerning brothers¹ which informs us that 322 sets (two or more siblings) died on the same day or within 24 hours. *"They are all tragic stories but perhaps none more so than where the brothers were not in the same unit or even in the same area when they lost their lives"*. The sorrow and anguish of their parents and family back home can only be imagined.

According to the 1901 Census for England and Wales, the family consisted of father and mother plus six children with their address noted as Winchmore Hill, Penn Street, Penn. Albert Wingrove, the father, was 35 and a chair turner, having been born in Penn Street. His wife Eliza, also 35, was born in Winchmore Hill as indeed were all the children: namely, Bertha D (16), Lily (13), Albert (1) Frank (8), Ernest (5) and Sidney (3). Ten years later, at the time of the Census of 1911, there was no change in the structure of the family and their address was Royal Cottages, Winchmore Hill.

¹ The Long, Long Trail website.

Albert and Eliza, both then 45, had been married for 27 years and produced the six children as already described. Bertha and Lily were both bead embroiderers, Albert (junior) was a Windsor chair maker, Frank a chair polisher and Ernest at 15 years of age was an under kennel man, Sidney (13) was at school. The household also included a boarder, William Hazell (43), a horseman.

Military information about Frank is very sketchy and virtually non-existent for Ernest. Frank's attestation in High Wycombe was on the 11 May 1915 and a description giving height as 5ft 6ins, girth when fully expanded 36ins and a 2.5in range of expansion, at least fleshes out the man, a little! He joined the Middlesex Regiment, 13th (Service) Battalion (Duke of Cambridge's Own) but it has proved difficult in pinning down exactly where he served and, eventually, died. However, it can be ascertained that as a result of World War 1, The Middlesex Regiment formed 49 Battalions due mainly to a surplus of volunteers and during the campaign received 81 battle honours, 5 Victoria Crosses but sustained approximately 12,270 casualties. The 13th (Service) Battalion was raised in September 1914 as part of Kitchener's Third New Army (K3) and in December 1914² moved to Hove, East Sussex. By early September 1915 when mobilised for war, the regiment had moved via Shoreham, Sussex, where they spent a month before moving on to Pirbright, Surrey. On mobilisation the battalion landed in Boulogne, France, on 2 September 1915. They then were engaged in action on the Western Front, including during 1915 **The Battle of Loos** and during 1916 the **German gas attack at Wulverghem**, the **Battle of Delville Wood** and the **Battle of Guillemont** (a phase of the **Battle of the Somme**). From a transcription of the 13th Battalion *War Diary* relating to August 1916 (in part), it refers to a Captain Reed, among others, being killed on 18 August at Guillemont – the same day as Frank Wingrove was 'killed in action'. Consequently, it probably is safe to assume Frank died during this same action. Another pointer in this respect is an earlier report in the *War Diary* for 8 August 1916 stating that the battalion had "*practised attacking Guillemont*".³ During August 1916 the battalion lost 9 Officers and 88 Other Ranks (ORs) plus 146 ORs missing. Frank was awarded The Allied Victory Medal, The British War Medal, 1914-18 and The 1914-15 Star.

Ernest Wingrove also enlisted in High Wycombe but there is no indication that this was at the same time as his elder brother Frank. Indeed, bearing in mind the 3 year age difference between them, it is probable the attestations were independent. However, Ernest joined the 2nd/8th Battalion, London Regiment (Post Office Rifles) which, today,⁴ "*are best remembered for their involvement as infantry on the Western Front in the First World War. Their bravery, tenacity and character during the severe circumstances of the trenches are well documented and their endeavours on the Somme, Passchendaele and elsewhere have earned the regiment high praise and a prestigious place in British military history. They have many military medals and accolades in evidence of this; 145 awards for gallantry including one Victoria Cross for a Sgt. A.J.Knight. Comprised mostly of Post Office employees, approximately 12,000 men fought with the regiment, suffering losses of 1,800 and 4,500 wounded.*"

*"To accommodate the swell of recruits a second Post Office Rifles Regiment was formed in September 1914. They were titled 2nd/8th Battalion, London Regiment. The second battalion initially served as a reserve regiment, supplying reinforcements for the 1st Battalion but in January 1917 the battalion also moved to France. They first saw action in the **Second Battle of Bullecourt** in May 1917".* A possible clue to the demise of Ernest and the action where this occurred is contained in a further passage where it states: "*Post Office Rifles were in the thick of the fighting through 1917, at Ypres from the start of the campaign. More than half of their fighting force was lost at the **Battle of Wurst Farm Ridge, Alberta Section, Ypres** on 20 September 1917".* This date coincides with the 'killed in action' date relating to Ernest Wingrove and his name being included also on the Menin Gate Memorial indicates that this is where he died.

He was awarded The Allied Victory Medal and The British War Medal, 1914-18.

² www.forces-war-records.co.uk/unit-info/1615/

³ www.13thmiddlesexww1.wordpress.com

⁴ The British Postal Museum & Archive (www.postalheritage.org.uk/page/postofficerifles)

Frank Wingrove is remembered with Honour and is buried at Guillemont Road Cemetery, Guillemont, Somme, France, (Grave V.H.6)

Ernest Wingrove is remembered with Honour on the Menin Gate Memorial, Ieper, Belgium, (Panel 54)

The names of the brothers, as well as appearing on the Amersham Memorial, are commemorated also on the Winchmore Hill Memorial Hall Plaque (see photograph). See chapter on Memorials to the Missing for details of the Menin Gate and engraving.



The Memorial Hall at Winchmore Hill, Penn Street, Amersham. The names of **E. WINGROVE** and **F. WINGROVE** are written on the panel on the right side of the door.

(photographs by Hazel Garas, 14 April 2014)

The headstone on the grave of Frank Wingrove at Guillemont Road Cemetery, Guillemont, Somme, France.

The wreath was placed by the family of 4837 Private Charles H F L Nicholls, D Company, 13th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, during a visit in 2015, "In everlasting memory of all his comrades and friends who never made it home, and in foreign fields still lay."

(photograph courtesy of Robert Noble)

