

PRIVATE WALTER ARTHUR PRICE

9408, 1st Battalion, Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry

Died age 20 on 22 January 1916

Remembered with honour on *Kirkee 1914-1918 Memorial, India*

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey, and in Twyning



Kirkee 1914-1918 Memorial



1914-15 Star Medal



Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry

WALTER ARTHUR PRICE was born on 26 February 1895 to Emily Price, a single mother from Brockeridge, Twyning, although he was not baptised until much later in the year on 29 December. Records at Gloucestershire Archives show that he was admitted to Twyning School in 1899, confirming his date of birth and his name as **Arthur Roberts**. Emily had been born in 1870 in Twyning and in 1891 she was working as a domestic servant for her widowed uncle in Cheltenham. By 1901 she was living at Shut-honger with **Charles Roberts**, a roadman, and three children, the eldest of whom was Arthur Roberts aged six. Arthur was educated in Twyning and Tewkesbury; he was also organ blower at Twyning Church and a member of the village Scout Troop. On the 1911 Census Emily and Charles were living in Naunton, near Upton-on-Severn, with the six children of their marriage.

By this time, Walter had enlisted as a regular soldier in the Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. On the Census, he was stationed in Cowley Barracks in Oxford; his 'apparent' age was shown as 18 years although he was actually 16. In 1913 he was posted to the 1st Battalion in India and was still there when war broke out. The Battalion was one of the few regular units in overseas garrisons not recalled home for service on the Western Front and was one of the British battalions in the 6th (Poona) Division, a regular Indian Army division.

After Turkey entered the war on Germany's side, the Division was sent to Basra, Mesopotamia (now Iraq), in November 1914 as part of

an Expeditionary Force to protect important British oil refineries. They were secured but, in September 1915, the Division was sent north along the River Tigris to take Baghdad. After initial success their advance was blocked at the *Battle of Ctesiphon* (22-24 November 1915) where Walter was wounded, sustaining a bad fracture to his thigh; he was evacuated to a hospital at Coloba, Bombay. The Division retired to Kut al Amara but was surrounded and eventually surrendered in April 1916.

The *Tewkesbury Register* reported Walter's fate. He wrote two letters to his mother, saying that he was being treated and fed well, and had '*plenty of fags*', but he felt rather weak. The second letter, on Christmas Day 1915, said that his thigh was in a bad state but he would soon be up and about again after treatment: '*Let's hope next Christmas is better than this one*'.

Acting Lance Corporal Walter Arthur Price (the *Register* reported his unpaid and unofficial promotion, and Price was his official name), died on 22 January 1916 and was buried in Bombay Cemetery. In 1962, as it was decided that this cemetery could not be maintained, his body was re-interred in a mass grave in Kirkee War Cemetery, near Poona. The names of those in the mass grave are listed on the *Kirkee 1914-1918 Memorial* within the cemetery.

Walter is also commemorated in Twyning Parish Church and on the War Memorial. He was awarded the '*1914-15 Star*' medal but his mother's application for the '*1914 Star*' was initially rejected as he was deemed 'ineligible', not having '*served in France*'.