

PRIVATE ARTHUR FRANCIS SALLIS

G/24743, 7th Royal West Kent Regiment

Died aged 31 on 21 March 1918

Buried with honour at *Chauny Communal Cemetery, France*; 2 I 17

Commemorated in Tewkesbury at the Cross and in the Abbey



Chauny Communal Cemetery, Laon, France



Royal West Kent Regiment

ARTHUR FRANCIS SALLIS was born in Tewkesbury in 1886, the son of William Sallis and Elizabeth (formerly Chamberlain). William was born in Tewkesbury and Elizabeth was from Tirley. William worked at a Corn Dealers and lived for many years in St. Mary's Lane; he died in 1908. Arthur attended the Abbey Schools and for many years was a teacher at the Abbey Sunday School. In 1911, as a Fish Salesman, he was living with his widowed mother at 3 Back of Swilgate. He was employed for fourteen years by Mrs. Sherwood of The Cross who described him as 'a very steady, worthy young man'.

Arthur enlisted in Birmingham, probably in 1915 as part of the 'Derby Scheme'; at the time he was living in Aston, Warwickshire. It is likely that he was posted to the East Kent Regiment (The Buffs), which needed reinforcement, but was subsequently transferred to the 7th (Service) Battalion of the Queen's Own (Royal West Kent) Regiment. This came under the command of the 55th Infantry Brigade in the 18th (Eastern) Division and was sent to France on 27 July 1915. In February 1918 the battalion transferred to the 53rd Infantry Brigade within the same Division.

In March 1918 the German Army launched a campaign known as the German Spring Offensive, lasting from 21 March to 18 July 1918. This was, in effect, their last throw of the dice; they realised that their only remaining chance of winning outright victory was to defeat the Allies while they had a temporary advantage in numbers afforded by the Russian surrender in late 1917 and before the overwhelming resources of the United States could be deployed.

There were four German offensives: *Opera-*

tion Michael was the primary attack intended to break through the Allied lines, outflank the British forces holding the front line from the River Somme to the English Channel, and defeat the British Army. Although the German Spring Offensive achieved considerable tactical success, it failed to achieve its objectives and created the conditions which led to the defeat of the German Army later in the year. At the start of the campaign the 18th Division was holding the front line in the southern part of the Fifth Army sector and accounts of the West Kents comment that the 'Battalion was annihilated on the first day of the German Spring Offensive'; the War Diary records that on 21 March 1918 they suffered casualties of 'approximately' 20 Officers and 577 Other Ranks.

Private Arthur Francis Sallis was one of those killed on 21 March 1918 which was the first day of the *Battle of St. Quentin* (21-23 March 1918), the opening phase of *Operation Michael*. However, it was only in October 1918 that the newspapers provided the information that Berlin had informed the Red Cross that: 'Disc sent in on 6/6/1918. The owner was killed and buried. No further details'. Arthur's body was recovered, most likely from its original burial in a German cemetery, and was re-interred after the war in *Chauny Communal Cemetery, British Extension*, Laon. This was created after the Armistice to accommodate battlefield burials and graves from smaller cemeteries in the surrounding area.

As well as Arthur, Elizabeth lost another son in the war, **Private Alfred Charles Sallis** [†], who died on 13 November 1918.