



John Wright

3/28289 Private, 3rd Battalion, The King's (Liverpool Regiment)

He died on 4th February 1917 in France, aged 30

John was buried in Fouquereuil Communal Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France

John Wright's origins are a little obscure, but we can be confident that he was born in Weybread and raised in Harleston. The first time he appeared, in the 1891 census it was as a four-year-old living with his grandparents, Jeremiah and Harriet Pallent on Swan Lane, and Jeremiah's daughter 18 years old Maude Pallent. Since John's surname was Wright, not Pallent, it does beg the question who his mother was.

To solve this mystery, we need to go back to 1841 when we find 20 years old William living with his parents, Simon and Elizabeth Wright in Wortwell. Simon Wright was a shoemaker; interestingly this was a trade traditionally associated with a high degree of literacy (and radicalism) particularly in the early/mid-19th century so perhaps it was no great surprise his son became a schoolteacher, appearing as such in 1851. Both William and Harriet Wright nee Brown were teachers, the Schoolmaster and School Mistress of a National School in Wangford, Suffolk. They had four children, all born in Wangford with Harriet Wright Jnr the second of their four children.

William Wright was to die young and by 1861, his orphaned daughter Harriet Jnr was living with her widowed grandmother, Millicent Brown, whilst her widowed mother, Harriet Wright Snr, was working in the Hoxne household of Absolom Feaveryear Jnr as a 'nurse'. This is a slightly deceptive title, the clue to her real role is given by the presence of a 3-week-old baby in the household. It was common practice, if you could afford it, to have a sort of mother's help when a new baby arrived; since there was already a 3-year-old and a 1-year-old in the house, you can see the mother would need such help! Harriet's oldest son, George Wright, was actually working as a labourer for Absolom Feaveryear Snr! Where her other, younger, children were is a bit of a mystery, but mortality rates were high in those days, so it is perfectly possible that the two younger children had, like their father, already died.

By the time Harriet Wright Jnr was 19, she was the mother of an illegitimate child, young Anna who was to become the mother of our Harleston Hero and it was this 3-year-old little girl she brought into her marriage with Christopher Cooper in Hoxne in the late spring of 1869; Christopher was happy to claim Anna as his own child so there may well have been a long-term liaison before they married. This marriage was to produce another child, Arthur Cooper, who appeared as a 1-year-old in the 1871 census when the family were living in Weybread, the Cooper's home although they originally

came from Mendham. This little boy, Arthur, was named for his uncle Arthur Cooper, who in turn was named for his own father, who in turn was named for his father – four generations of Arthur Coopers the earliest of whom seems to have been doing reasonably well for himself at the time of his death in 1846.

AT MENDHAM, NEAR HARLESTON.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,

By *HOWLETT and LENNY,*

On Saturday, Sept. 26th, 1846,

5 Very choice Suffolk Milch COWS, useful Cart Gelding, Swine, and Farming Effects, together with the Furniture and domestic articles of the late Mr. **ARTHUR COOPER,** deceased.

Sale to commence at Twelve o'clock.

The Coopers were peripherally involved in an assault against local Charles Bloomfield in 1868, shortly before Christopher's marriage. Christopher and his brother Arthur had been at the Heath House, Weybread leaving the pub at about 9.30 in the evening. Four other men ganged up on Bloomfield, assaulting him quite seriously, on the pretext he had informed against them to a local policeman. It seems quite cut and dried that Christopher was not involved in the assault, Arthur's innocence was a little less clear cut, but he was not charged so escaped the fairly heavy fines the other men were landed with!

After her slightly rocky start in life, orphaned young and with an illegitimate child before she was twenty it seems as if Harriet had finally found herself a safe and secure home. Unfortunately, this was not to last, and her husband Christopher died in 1876, aged just 28 leaving Harriet with two children to raise – there may have been more but none survived to the next census.

Meanwhile, also in Weybread, Jeremiah and Mary Pallent were also raising a family appearing there in the 1871 census with 5 children in the household. Mary died, leaving Jeremiah with the need for a wife and with Harriet in need of a husband, the two combined their households with a marriage in late 1877.

The 1881 census has Jeremiah and Harriet Pallent still living in Weybread with the three younger Pallent children, Arthur 13, Betsy 11 and Maude aged 8 plus 15 years old step-daughter Anna Wright and step-child, Arthur Cooper aged 11. Anna was rather harshly described as an 'Idiot since Birth'. Perhaps, bearing in mind her mother's own indiscretion and that there was not much protection for children with learning difficulties, it is not too surprising that Anna (or Ann as she was listed in 1891) also had an illegitimate child in her early 20s.

Anyway, the grandparents stepped in and when the family next appeared, in Swan Lane in 1891, there was young John Wright, aged 4, living with Jeremiah Pallant and his grandmother Harriet, whilst his mother, Annie, was in the workhouse in company of another son, 1 year old Arthur Wright who had actually been born in the workhouse.

It was her older child, John Wright who was to die in France in 1917.

Rather confusingly, in 1901, young John, a butcher's errand boy, was still living with Jeremiah and Harriet but was then going under the name of Pallent, although described as a stepson (when he was actually Jeremiah's step grandson) whilst his 35 years old mother Ann (also in the household) was accurately described as a stepdaughter whilst going under her step father's name of Pallant. Most confusing but it seems the two had adopted their mother / grandmother's husband's surname.

After her challenging start in life, Harriet enjoyed the security of marriage to Jeremiah for over 30 years until the chap died in 1909, aged 72. This forced Harriet to leave the home she had enjoyed on Swan Lane for the last two censuses and by 1911 she had wound up living out of town in the Factory Cottages, sharing with a much younger widow, Alice Wisken and her three children. Doubtless the little bit of rent that Harriet could afford made Alice's life easier. Harriet ended her days back across the border, dying in Hartismere in late 1919.

As for John and his mother, in 1911 both were in the Pulham Workhouse, we cannot tell if Anna (who was then 45 and described as a former charwoman) had made it out of the workhouse in the intervening years and bearing in mind her increasing age and known learning difficulties it is not so surprising she was back inside. However, John was a young man and one would expect this 'former labourer' to be out earning his money! Perhaps the workhouse rather agreed with this point of view and got him a job in the Industrial North, explaining how this Harleston lad with Suffolk antecedents wound up enlisting in Manchester.

We mentioned above how Jeremiah claimed John Wright, son of his step-daughter as a grandson in 1891; an actual grandson, Richard Pallent, son of Jeremiah Pallent's wife's step-daughter does appear on our War Memorial. <http://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/media/6541867/richard-pallent.pdf> This lad was also illegitimate, the son of Jeremiah's daughter Ann. Ann had a long running relationship with a Richard Smith and he, following the death of Ann Pallent, took his three illegitimate children into his own household, gave them a home and rustled up a step-mother for them!

When Richard Pallent died, he was married man with a business on the London Road and a daughter. His name appears on our war memorial.

When John Wright died, and it is not known whether his death occurred on the 4th or 5th of February 1917, he was isolated from the rest of his unit, just him and one other man are buried together in a single grave in a small village in France. His life was closely woven in with that of Richard Pallent and many parallels can be drawn between the two men but in contrast to Pallent, who is marked on our memorial, John Wright had left the town, his step grandfather, the only consistent father figure in his life was dead, his grandmother who had taken much of the burden of raising him, died shortly after the war concluded although she was to receive his backpay and war gratuity. His mother, assuming she was still alive, was probably not the most pro-active of ladies. There was no-one to propose his name be proudly carved on the war memorial alongside that of his step cousin. Maybe this should be rectified at some point but in the meantime, it is good we remember this son of Harleston.