



A Burial Service for

**Serjeant Richard Rounsley
12th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry**

An Unknown Soldier of The Durham Light Infantry

And

An Unknown Soldier of the Great War

**14:00 hours on Wednesday 17 September 2025
CWGC Warlencourt British Cemetery, France**

**Service conducted by the Reverend John Storey CF
Chaplain to 5th Battalion The Rifles
Déroulement de la Cérémonie présidé par
le Révérend John Storey CF**

Serjeant Richard Rounsley



Serjeant Richard Rounsley was born in Tanfield, County Durham, on 16 February 1886. He was one of eleven children born to Eli Rounsley and his wife Isabella. At the age of 15 Richard was already working in the mines and is recorded as having been a miner on his enlistment into the Army on 12 September 1914, shortly after the outbreak of the First World War.

On 29 August 1908, Richard married Ann Smith in Lanchester, County Durham. The couple had 4 children, William born on 22 March 1906, Eliza Joan born on 28 March 1909, Lily born on 8 August 1911 and Rhoda born on 22 February 1913.

Having enlisted at the outbreak of war, the then Private Rounsley was posted to 12th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry which had been formed in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He arrived on the Western Front on 26 August 1915 with the battalion and quickly rose through the ranks being promoted to lance corporal on 19 December 1915, corporal on 14 January 1916 and serjeant on 27 June 1916. 12th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry took part in the fighting in the early days of the Battle of the Somme and on 8 July 1916 Serjeant Rounsley is recorded as having been wounded with shell shock.

At 12:00 hours on 3 October 1916, 12th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry moved into Crescent Alley southeast of Le Sars to relieve 5th Battalion The Northumberland Fusiliers. B Company was deployed to Blaydon Trench which was heavily shelled. The entrance to Crescent Alley and the Battalion HQ were also shelled. There was shelling again on 4 October.

On 5 October 1916 the battalion remained in Crescent Trench and the shelling continued. The War Diaries of 23rd Division record that there was heavy rain all day and the ground was 'practically impossible for military operations'. The bad weather and the deep mud made all movement difficult. The rain was

continuous between 2 and 6 October and 'the enemy's artillery fire daily increased in violence and accuracy.'

It was during the shelling on 5 October 1916 that Serjeant Rounsley and two other soldiers of 12th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry, Private Robert Walton and Private James Richardson, appear to have been killed.

In March 2021, the remains of three soldiers were found close to what had been the location of Blaydon Trench during the installation of a wind turbine. Two of these men had insignia of The Durham Light Infantry on them. They were found lying on top of each other in what appeared to have been a shell hole. After extensive research by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre's Commemorations Team, one of the these men has been identified through DNA testing as Serjeant Rounsley. Work will continue to identify the second Durham Light Infantry soldier. Today we will remember Serjeant Richard Rounsley and he will be laid to rest alongside his two unknown comrades.

From 1916, fierce fighting took place on the battlefields of Warlencourt and Le Sars. The three casualties being laid to rest today, including Serjeant Richard Rounsley, were recovered from these former battlefields. Along with over 3,500 of their comrades, they will now be laid to rest in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Warlencourt British Cemetery, which was made in late 1919 when graves were brought in from the surrounding area. Over a third of the casualties buried here are sadly unidentified.

Serjeant Richard Rounsley est né à Tanfield, dans Durham, le 16 février 1886. Il était l'un des onze enfants nés à Eli Rounsley et sa femme Isabella. À l'âge de 15 ans, Richard travaillait déjà dans les mines et est enregistré comme mineur lors de son enrôlement dans l'armée le 12 septembre 1914, peu après le déclenchement de la Première Guerre mondiale.

Le 29 août 1908, Richard épousa Ann Smith à Lanchester, dans Durham. Le couple eut quatre enfants: William, né le 22 mars 1906, Eliza Joan, née le 28 mars 1909, Lily, née le 8 août 1911, et Rhoda, née le 22 février 1913.

Après avoir enrôlé au début de la guerre, Private Rounsley fut affecté au 12^e bataillon du Durham Light Infantry, qui avait été formé à Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Il est arrivé sur le front occidental le 26 août 1915 avec le bataillon et gravit rapidement les échelons, étant promu à lance corporal le 19 décembre 1915, corporal le 14 janvier 1916 et serjeant le 27 juin 1916. Le 12^e bataillon du Durham Light Infantry a pris part aux combats au début de la bataille de la Somme et, le 8 juillet 1916, Serjeant Rounsley était répertorié blessé avec choc.

À midi, le 3 octobre 1916, le 12^e bataillon du Durham Light Infantry s'est déplacé vers Crescent Alley, au sud-est de Le Sars, pour relever le 5^e bataillon du Northumberland Fusiliers. B Company a été déployée dans la tranchée Blaydon, qui a été lourdement bombardée. L'entrée de Crescent Alley et le quartier général du bataillon ont également été bombardés. De nouveaux bombardements eurent lieu le 4 octobre.

Le 5 octobre 1916, le bataillon resta dans la tranchée Crescent et les bombardements se poursuivirent. Les journaux de guerre de la 23^e division indiquent qu'il pleuvait abondamment toute la journée et que le terrain était 'pratiquement impraticable pour les opérations militaires'. Le mauvais temps et la boue profonde rendaient tout déplacement difficile. La

pluie fut continue entre le 2 et le 6 octobre et 'les tirs d'artillerie ennemis gagnèrent chaque jour en violence et en précision'.

C'est pendant les bombardements du 5 octobre 1916 que le Serjeant Rounsley et deux autres soldats du 12^e bataillon du Durham Light Infantry, Private Robert Walton et Private James Richardson, semblent avoir été tués.

En mars 2021, les restes de trois soldats ont été découverts près de l'emplacement de l'ancienne tranchée Blaydon lors de l'installation d'une éolienne. Deux de ces hommes portaient l'insigne du Durham Light Infantry. Ils ont été retrouvés gisant l'un sur l'autre dans ce qui semblait être un cratère d'obus. Après des recherches approfondies menées par le Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre, l'un de ces hommes a été identifié grâce à des tests ADN comme étant Serjeant Rounsley. Les travaux se poursuivront pour identifier le deuxième soldat du Durham Light Infantry. Aujourd'hui, nous nous souviendrons du Serjeant Richard Rounsley, qui reposera aux côtés de ses deux camarades inconnus.

Call to Worship

Appel à Adoration

'I am the resurrection and the life,' says the Lord. 'Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.'

John 11.25,26

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

All **And also with you.**

Bidding Prayer

Prière

My Brothers and Sisters, we meet in the name of Jesus Christ, who died and was raised to the glory of God the Father.

We remember before God our brothers who we lay to rest in this place, Serjeant Richard Rounsley, and two soldiers of the Great War known only unto God.

We give thanks for their lives, their service, and their sacrifice; we commend them to God our merciful redeemer and judge and commit their bodies to be buried.

God of all consolation,
your Son Jesus Christ was moved to tears
at the grave of Lazarus his friend.

We pray for all those who have grieved for these their loved ones: look with compassion on your children;
give to troubled hearts the light of hope
and strengthen us all by the gift of faith,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Scripture Reading

Lecture des Écritures Saintes

Read by a Representative of the British Embassy Paris

Ecclesiasticus Chapter 44 v 1-3 & 6-14 (NRSV)

Let us now sing the praises of famous men,
our ancestors in their generations.
The Lord apportioned to them great glory,
his majesty from the beginning.
There were those who ruled in their kingdoms,
and made a name for themselves by their valour;
rich men endowed with resources,
living peacefully in their homes—
all these were honoured in their generations,
and were the pride of their times.
Some of them have left behind a name,
so that others declare their praise.
But of others there is no memory;
they have perished as though they had never existed;
they have become as though they had never been born,
they and their children after them.
But these also were godly men,
whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten;
their wealth will remain with their descendants,
and their inheritance with their children's children.
Their descendants stand by the covenants;
their children also, for their sake.
Their offspring will continue for ever,
and their glory will never be blotted out.
Their bodies are buried in peace,
but their name lives on generation after generation.

This is the Word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

Reading

Lecture

Read by Captain Archie Ford

5th Battalion The Rifles

My Last Request

Based on the poem by Bill Ridley

A Veteran of The Durham Light Infantry

Gone is the life that once lay before me,
Faded like mist on a warm summer's morn,
Dead is the heart that once, strong and stalwart,
Pumped the blood to run red, sweet and warm.

Gone is the strength to march as the fastest,
No longer the eyes shine like diamonds so bright.
Purged is the soul that screamed out for vengeance,
As with the bayonet charged into the night.

Proud I was to be one of the many,
Being with them I was clothed in their light,
With countless hurts my fights are completed,
I'll march to glory with my Durham Light.

And as I walk through the vale of darkness
Eyes firmly fixed on a pinpoint of light,
I'll rejoice at the loud cries of welcome
From the friends I'd lost in the Durham Light.

So bury me now as becomes a good 'Durham'
With dignity, respect, and a modicum of pride
With bugle and flag, my badge and my beret,
And eight true comrades to march at my side.

Gospel Reading

Lecture de l'Évangile

Read by Liz Woof

Great Niece of Serjeant Rounsley

John Chapter 14 v 1-6 (NRSV)

Jesus said to His disciples: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'

This is the Word of the Lord.

All **Thanks be to God.**

Address

Allocution

Blessing of the Grave

Bénédiction de la Tombe

O God, whose Son Jesus Christ was laid in a tomb: bless, we pray, these graves as the place where the bodies of these your servants, Richard and his comrades in arms, may rest in peace, through your Son, who is the resurrection and the life; who died and is alive and reigns with you now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

The Commendation

L'Éloge

God our creator and redeemer, by your power Christ conquered death and returned to you in glory. Confident of your victory and claiming His promises, we entrust Serjeant Richard Rounsley and these two soldiers who died alongside him into your keeping in the name of Jesus our Lord, who, though He died, is now alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

The Committal

L'Enterrement

We have entrusted our fallen comrades to God's mercy and now we commit their bodies to the ground: earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust: in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, who will transform our frail bodies that they may be conformed to His glorious body, who died, was buried, and rose again for us. To Him be glory for ever.

All **Amen.**

The Exhortation

L'Éxhortation

Read by Serjeant Ryan Wood

5th Battalion The Rifles

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.

All **We will remember them.**

The Last Post

Sonnerie aux Morts

Played by Rifleman Tomasi Matakibau

5th Battalion The Rifles

Silence

Reveille

Kohima Epitaph

L'Épitaphe de Kohima

Read by a Rifleman of the Bearer Party

When you go home tell them of us and say:
'For your tomorrow, we gave our today.'

Laying of Wreaths

Dépôts des Gerbes

Prayers

Prières

Almighty God,
from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed:
kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all, the true love of peace
and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom
those who take counsel for the nations of the earth
that in tranquillity your kingdom may go forward,
till the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Most merciful and ever-living God,
we remember those whom you have gathered
from the storm of war into the peace of your presence:
grant that we, being faithful till death,
may receive with them the crown of life that never fades,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Eternal Father, who did not spare your own beloved Son,
but gave him to die for the redemption of mankind:
hear us as we pray for those who have mourned the men
we lay to rest here, and all those who continue to mourn
loved ones lost to violence and war.

May your love be known to those who weep;
may they be comforted in their loneliness and desolation;
may they be drawn ever into a closer fellowship with you
until they are reunited with those they have loved in the
boundless eternity that you promise to all your children;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Collect of The Durham Light Infantry

Récitation du Durham Light Infantry

Read by Major Ret'd Chris Lawton MBE DL

The Durham Light Infantry Association

Almighty God, who requirest that thy servants be found faithful, grant, we pray thee, that we, The Durham Light Infantry, who twice a year remember the great valour of those who went before us, may ever be ready as they to fight the good fight, and above all things to give obedience to thy call, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Prière du Seigneur

Trusting in the compassion of God, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

All **Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

The Blessing

Séparation de Dernière Bénédiction

God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest; to the Church, The King, the Commonwealth, and all humankind, peace and concord; and to us and all His servants, life everlasting; and may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you and with all those whom you love, this day and for evermore.

All **Amen.**



Richard Rounsley (standing centre) with his parents and the eldest of his siblings



The Ministry of Defence, through the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre, is responsible for the research, identification and burial of all British casualties worldwide.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for the graves, memorials, records and memory of the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two World Wars.

© Crown Copyright/JCCC – 2025