

# Gunner Walter James ALLEN

Service number 1600335  
Royal Artillery  
165 Battery, 56<sup>th</sup> (Cornwall) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment  
Died on 22 March 1941, aged 28

Born in Wells, Walter joined the Royal Artillery in July 1940. By March 1941 his regiment was stationed at Plymouth to protect the city and its naval dockyards from German air raids. On 20 March he returned from leave in Wells and was caught in an air raid while at Plymouth station. It was the first night of what became known as the Plymouth Blitz. Two days later Walter died of his injuries, aged 28. The Blitz continued on the nights of March 21 and April 21, 22, 23, 28 and 29, and destroyed the centres of Plymouth, Devonport and East Stonehouse.



Walter in uniform on the platform at Tucker Street Station  
Photography courtesy of Mrs Carol Porch, Walter's niece

Walter was born on 17 October 1912 to Arthur and Florence Allen, and was baptised at St Thomas' Church on 20 October 1912. He had a brother and sister, Doris and Leonard, and his father was a painter. They lived at 3, Lorne Place, Wells.

He married Marjorie Smith on 19 September 1938 at St Thomas' Church. The service was conducted by Bishop Wynne Wilson, the former Bishop of Bath & Wells, for whom Marjorie had worked. Their reception was held at the Bekynton Café and they went to Weymouth for their honeymoon.

In September 1939, they were living at 4, Keward, and Walter was working as a shop assistant.

On 28 March 1941 the *Wells Journal* reported:

The death of Gunner Walter James Allen, of Sunnydene, Allen's Lane, Bath-road, Wells, by enemy action in a South-West town on Thursday last has caused very sincere regret in his home town. Gunner Allen was a son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Allen, of Bath-road, and was 28 years of age...

Prior to his joining the Royal Artillery in July last Mr. Allen was employed at the World's Stores [12, High St], and was much liked by customers and was popular among his fellow workers. He was home on short leave last week and attended a dance in the City on the

Wednesday evening [19<sup>th</sup>]. The following day [20<sup>th</sup>] while returning to his station he met his death during an air raid.

The funeral took place at Wells on Wednesday afternoon with full military honours. The first part of the service was held at St. Thomas' Church, and the interment followed at Wells Cemetery... An army lorry was used as a hearse and an escort was provided by a bearer and firing party from a local military station. The coffin was covered with the Union Jack. Two Gunners were present representing his Battery ... After the committal service three volleys were fired over the grave and a bugler sounded the Last Post and Reveille.

Walter is buried in Wells Cemetery, in Section H. Row J. Grave 2. He is also remembered on the rolls of honour at Wells Town Hall and Wells Cemetery.

Marjorie returned to Barrow-in-Furness to be with her parents. She later moved to Coventry and in 1942 she remarried.



Walter and Marjorie's wedding photo  
Photography courtesy of Mrs Carol Porch, Walter's niece



Walter and Marjorie's in Weymouth, perhaps on their honeymoon  
Photography courtesy of Mrs Carol Porch, Walter's niece

We would like to thank Mrs Carol Porch, Walter's niece, and Jeffrey Allen for their help with this article.