

# Arthur Percy Bale



[image from authors collection]

By Karen Nesbitt

**December 1895 to October 17<sup>th</sup> 1916**

Arthur Percy Bale was born in Paddington, London in December 1895 to Frank and Kate Eliza Bale. He had two sisters, Dorothy (my gran) born in December 1894 and Violet in December 1902.



Kate, Arthur and Dorothy about 1901  
[from authors collection]

Frank Bale was often away when the children were young as Frank was a music hall artiste sometimes performing on his own and sometimes with his four brothers. One stage name he used was Tyko Menia or Professor Menia. Frank was also part of a successful family juggling act, the Zanettos, which travelled the UK, Europe and USA.

In June 1909 Frank with his performing dog, Towzer, left his brothers in the USA and returned to the UK. The Zanettos continued their highly successful tour but Frank had presumably tired of being apart from his family for such long periods of time.

In 1909 Frank moved the family to Bognor, Sussex and became well known as the Bognor Clown performing in local theatres and on the sands until the 1930s.



[from authors collection]

The family lived in Norfolk Street, Bognor and enjoyed an excursion on the Bognor Queen Motor Launch to the Black Rabbit at Arundel.



Arthur wearing a cap (like his dad's) is sitting in the middle next to the Captain.  
[from authors collection]

It is likely that Arthur assisted his father; a photograph dated about 1909 shows Arthur on the Bognor sands with Frank and Towzer.



[from authors collection]

In 1911 Arthur is recorded on the census as a music hall artiste. His nickname was Flick and I believe he performed on stage as Young Tyko Menia. His elder sister, Dorothy, performed on stage as Edie Bale and his younger sister Violet was a young comic performer and male impersonator and went on to assist her father as the Bognor Clown particularly with one of their acts; the Living Marionettes.



Arthur with Dorothy, Violet and Kate – about 1910  
 [from authors collection]

In approx 1913 Arthur joined the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Cyclist Battalion. The Bale family were renowned cyclists; Frank's uncles and family had a cycling act called the Bale Troupe. Did Arthur have a family interest in bikes or is this just a coincidence?!





Arthur about 1915 – Cycling Battalion cap badge  
 [from authors collection]

Arthur volunteered on 27 Oct 1915 in Southampton aged 19yrs 10 months. Arthur was a private in the 2nd Battalion Hampshire Regiment. They were then part of the 88th Brigade, 29th Division.

Arthur was at Beaumont Hamel on 1 July; his regiment at St John's Rd in reserve and then in Mary Redan Trench. On 27 July they were sent from Candas to the Ypres sector but brought back on 7 October to the Somme. By 11 October they were in trenches south of Gueudecourt and on 12 they were in support during the attack on the Hilt Trench. On 18 October they attacked Grease Trench and their objective was taken and held. The conditions were terrible in the trenches and they were not relieved until 20 October.

The information that I have from the Commonwealth Graves Commission website is that Arthur died on the 17 October 1916; the Battalion records show that casualties for 17 October included 13 wounded, 10 sick to hospital and 1 killed. He has no known grave and his reference on the

Thiepval Memorial is Pier and Face 7C and 7B. The Stage Year Book printed a Roll of Honour – Killed in the War 1916, and this includes Arthur's death as:

Young Tyko Menia (Private A. Bale)

Arthur Percy Bale is commemorated on the War Memorial which is inside the Bognor Regis Memorial Hospital.

In 2012 he was remembered as one of the missing in a very special exhibition at the Historial de la Grande Guerre, the First World War Museum in Peronne, France. He was the soldier chosen to represent all those who went missing on October 17 1916.



Observer Series 5 may 2012

For more information about Frank Bale, the Bale family and the Zanettos:  
[www.theroyalzanettos.com](http://www.theroyalzanettos.com)