

= Frank Tarr =

Francis Nathaniel Tarr ( 14 August 1887 ? 18 July 1915 ) was an English international rugby union player . He played centre for the Leicester Tigers and , between 1909 and 1913 , won four caps for England , scoring two tries . He also earned three Blues while reading law at Oxford .

He later became a solicitor in Leicester before volunteering for overseas service during the First World War . He was killed in July 1915 near Ypres on the Western Front , after being hit by a shell splinter while serving as a lieutenant in the 1 / 4th Battalion , Leicestershire Regiment . Tarr was one of 27 former England internationals killed in the war .

= = Early life = =

Born on 14 August 1887 at Ironville , near Belper , Derbyshire , Frank Tarr was the only son of Frederick and Emma Tarr . His father was a coal merchant . He was educated at Stoneygate School , Leicester , where he began playing rugby , before moving up to Uppingham School in 1902 , where he was Captain of Games and played three @-@ quarter in the rugby team for two years , encountering a future Oxford and England team @-@ mate Ronald Poulton @-@ Palmer playing for Rugby School . From 1906 to 1910 he read law at University College , Oxford .

= = Rugby career = =

In his first season at Oxford , Tarr played for the ' A ' team , which also included another future England player Anthony Henniker @-@ Gotley . He was later selected for the senior team and gained three Blues from 1907 to 1909 . He won his first Blue in the 1907 Varsity Match on 10 December , alongside Henry Vassall . Cambridge , with some notable international players on the team , were the clear favourites on the day . After they won the toss and elected to kick off with the wind behind them , the majority of the first 40 minutes was played in Oxford 's half , much of it in their 25 . Yet Cambridge failed to break through Oxford 's defence , chiefly that of the centres Vassall and Tarr . Just before half time , with a scrum deep in Oxford 's half , Rupert Williamson fed George Cunningham . The ball came to Tarr , who drew his opposite man , K. G. Macleod , and timed his pass to Vassall so that he , in turn , drew the Cambridge left wing near the half @-@ way line and put H. Martin to run in a try from there . Oxford went on to win 16 ? 0 .

With Oxford having won the Varsity Match in 1906 and again in 1907 , Harold Hodges , the Oxford captain , was inclined to keep the winning three @-@ quarter line for 1908 , including the centre combination of Vassall and Tarr . One of that year 's freshers was Tennant Sloan , a capped Scottish centre , who chose to try out for full @-@ back , realising that he was unlikely to be picked ahead of either of the incumbent centres . Vassall and Tarr had excellent ball handling skills , were quick around the field and fine decision makers ; Tarr was also a formidable tackler . Ronnie Poulton played several games for Oxford ahead of the Varsity Match but it was clear that Hodges preferred the Vassall @-@ Tarr pairing and Poulton only played when Vassall was injured , as he did in the 20 ? 0 defeat of Richmond RFC . On 12 December , the 1908 Varsity Match resulted in a hard fought 5 ? 5 draw , the Cambridge pack having improved considerably since the previous year . As it turned out , Vassall 's persistent ankle injury rendered him useless just five minutes into the game . The Times noted Tarr 's performance saying : " FN Tarr , at left centre three @-@ quarter , gave a magnificent display of defensive play . "

Tarr earned his first England cap on 9 January 1909 against the touring Australians at Rectory Field , Blackheath . His opportunity came up with both Vassall and John Birkett injured . Also earning their first caps that day were Edgar Mobbs on the right wing and Alex Ashcroft , of Cambridge University , at fly @-@ half . England took an early lead , when Tarr put Mobbs in for a try in the opening stages . That try has been described by his contemporary , rugby journalist and author E. H. D. Sewell , as being " one of the very best ever scored , being perfect in execution from the moment Tarr first received the ball to the moment Mobbs touched it down for a try . " However , Australia took control of the game to win 9 ? 3 .

Tarr was selected to play Wales the following week in Cardiff . Although England played better than expected , Wales were favourites to win and beat the visitors 8 ? 0 . Two weeks later , on 30 January , England played France with a half @-@ back combination of Frank Hutchinson , earning his first cap , and Williamson ; Poulton making his debut at centre alongside Tarr ; and Mobbs and Tom Simpson on the wings . France was not yet part of what was to become the Five Nations tournament ( now the Six Nations ) and was a relatively easy side to play . England won the game comfortably 22 ? 0 , with Tarr scoring two tries , one through good interplay with Mobbs and the other , a fine individual run . Despite the tries , Tarr was dropped from the England squad .

For the 1909 Varsity Match , Cunningham announced his choice of Poulton at a meeting on 2 December which Vassall was unable to attend . Cunningham sent him a letter by hand informing him of the decision . When the note returned undelivered , Cunningham hesitated , at which point Tarr offered to give up his own place for Poulton but Cunningham stuck to his initial selection . The game was played on 11 December , with Oxford at the start having the worse of it until one moment turned the game around : after the Oxford forwards got the ball back , Gotley , at scrum @-@ half , sent the ball to Cunningham , who passed on to Tarr and he to his fellow centre Colin Gilray . He fed the ball to Poulton on the left wing still inside the Oxford half . Poulton then broke through the defence to score under the posts . With Oxford eight points ahead at the end of the first quarter , Tarr was forced off the field after breaking his collarbone making a tackle , and missed much of what was described by referee F.C. Potter @-@ Irwin as " the fastest and most spectacular Varsity Match he had ever witnessed " . Oxford beat Cambridge 23 ? 3 , Poulton scoring five tries .

After graduating a Bachelor of Arts , Tarr was articled to the solicitors firm of Owston , Dickinson , Simpson , and Bigg in Leicester , and also joined the Leicester Tigers , then as now considered one of the strongest clubs in the country . He scored 72 points in 94 appearances . In 1913 , having been dropped by England four years earlier , he was surprised to be called up again to play Scotland on 15 March at Twickenham . Tarr was not at his best and it was to be his last international appearance . England , meanwhile , only managed a 3 ? 0 victory , but it was enough to regain the Calcutta Cup and earn its first Grand Slam .

Although Tarr spent the majority of his rugby career with Oxford and Leicester , he is recorded as representing club teams Headingly and Richmond F.C. and also Midland Counties .

= = = International appearances = = =

= = Military record and death = =

While at Oxford , Tarr had served in the Officers ' Training Corps , reaching the rank of cadet sergeant . In 1911 , he joined the Territorial Force , serving with the 1 / 4th Battalion , Leicestershire Regiment , as a second lieutenant . In 1913 , he was promoted to lieutenant and when war was declared the following year , Tarr enlisted almost immediately , becoming the regiment machine @-@ gun officer . His battalion was deployed to the Western Front with the 46th ( North Midland ) Division and landed at le Havre , France , on 3 March 1915 . Following the Second Battle of Ypres , the battalion 's dugouts were located between Lake Zillebeke and the Ypres ? Comines railway line south @-@ east of Ypres , Belgium . On the afternoon of 18 July 1915 , Tarr , who was the acting adjutant of his battalion and whose name had been put forward for promotion to captain , had gone to the dugouts of the 5th Battalion , Lincolnshire Regiment , towards Zillebeke , to liaise with the adjutant . While the Germans were shelling the position , Tarr put his head out to tell some men to remain under cover when a splinter from a shell struck him in the face , killing him . If it had struck any other part of his body , he would have survived .

Tarr was buried in the Railway Dugouts Burial Ground that night , not far from where he was killed . Captain John Milne , in Footprints of the 1 / 4th Leicestershire Regiment , described Tarr as

" ... the most attractive personality in the battalion , young , good @-@ looking , full of charm , with an eye that always had a twinkle in it , a born leader , yet the kindest person possible , a Rugger international , the idol of the machine @-@ gun section , which he commanded before he became

adjutant . Everybody was heartbroken , for everybody would miss him they would not look upon his like again .... "

Tarr was one of 27 England rugby players killed in the First World War . There are memorials to him on the family headstone in Welford Road Cemetery , at Uppingham School , University College , Oxford , the Oxford University rugby club and the Richmond Athletic Ground .