

Private Richard Watts
Regimental Number: 23092
York and Lancaster Regiment

born: 1870 - died: 20 May 1918

Richard Watts, born in 1870 in Fermoy, Country Cork, Ireland,¹ was the son of George and Ellen (nee Coleman).² Richard's father was born in Oxfordshire, but was serving in the Dublin Fusiliers in Fermoy.³ Richard came to England to join his sister between 1903 and 1904⁴ and married Edith Marchant Brownhill in 1904 in Birmingham.⁵ In 1911, he was a labourer, living on Doncaster Road, Ferrybridge Yorkshire, with his wife, Edith, and three of his four children: two sons (Richard and John Thomas) and a daughter (Mary).⁶ Their eldest son, George, was staying with his aunt and uncle⁷ and a second daughter, Edith, was born 1914.⁸

Richard first served his country during the Boer War. He served with the Dublin Fusiliers from 1892 until his discharge in 1903.⁹ At the outbreak of World War I, Richard, who was then 44, was older than the average soldier. He enlisted in the 6th Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment in Pontefract, Yorkshire.¹⁰ The 6th Battalion was formed at Pontefract in August 1914 as part of the K1 Army Group of Kitchener's Army and was under the orders of 32nd Brigade in 11th (Northern) Division. The Battalion first served in Italy and Egypt and then moved to France in July 1916 to reinforce the Third Army on the Somme.¹¹

Richard joined World War I in Egypt on 25 October 1915.¹² He later served in northern France, which is where he was gassed.¹³ He was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 16 May 1918, where he died four days later. He was buried the following day in the Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 1, Row F, Grave 25). He was a member of the Church of England and the chaplain, J. K. Tibbits, presided over the burial. His wife was notified of his death and she received the monies owing to him from the army after his death.¹⁴



Gravestone, Pernes British Military Cemetery¹⁵

On 16 May, 198 soldiers were admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, bringing the total number of patients to 388.¹⁶ Richard was one of 115 soldiers who died at this CCCS in May – more than in any of the other three and a half months that the 1st CCCS was in Pernes. The Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when the 1st and 4th Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.¹⁷

Richard's brother, William, a Private in the 8th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, had died just nine months before (August 1917) and is buried in the Ypres Reservoir Cemetery in Belgium. William had also served in the South African Campaign.¹⁸

Richard was awarded the 1914-15 Star for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915.¹⁹ Although the records could not be found, Richard was probably also awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre). Both Richard and his brother are commemorated on the Great War Memorial in Fermoy, Ireland.²⁰

Richard's wife remarried in 1919²¹ and died in 1959.²²



Fallen sons of Fermoy: R Watts and W. Watts.
Great War Memorial Wall, Fermoy, Ireland²³

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¹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 3 December 2014), entry for Richard Watts, County/Island: Yorkshire-West Riding, Registration district: Pontefract, Registration District Number: 505, Sub-registration district: Knottingley, ED, institution, or vessel: 13, Piece: 27449

² Information from Richard Watts' granddaughter, Valerie Rushton, 3 December 2014

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 3 December 2014), entry for Richard Watts, Inferred County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6d, Page: 530

⁶ "1911 England Census," entry for Richard Watts

⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 3 December 2014), entry for George Wath (Watts), County/Island: Warwickshire, Registration district: Aston, Registration District Number: 385, Sub-registration district: Duddeston, ED, institution, or vessel: 20, Piece: 18250

⁸ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 3 December 2014), entry for Edith Watts, Registration District: Pontefract, County: Yorkshire-West Riding, Volume: 9c, Page: 204

⁹ Information from Richard Watts' granddaughter, Valerie Rushton, 4 December 2014

¹⁰ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 3 December 2014), entry for Richard Watts

¹¹ "The Wartime Memories Project - The Great War: York and Lancaster Regiment 6th Btn," <http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/alliedarmy-view.php?pid=4988>; accessed 3 December 2014

¹² "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 3 December 2014), entry for R. Watts

¹³ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Library and Archives Canada, (records accessed 2013 & 2014), Record Group 9, series IIIIC10, volume 4556, Record number 504

¹⁴ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 19 January 2015), entry for Richard Watts

¹⁵ Photograph courtesy of Richard Watts' granddaughter, Valerie Rushton, 26 February 2015

¹⁶ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 15 December 2014)

¹⁷ "Pernes British Military Cemetery" *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>; accessed 13 January 2015)

¹⁸ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," (www.cwgc.org; accessed 3 December 2014), entry for Watts, W.

¹⁹ "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914-1920," entry for R. Watts

²⁰ "Irish War Memorials," <http://www.irishwarmemorials.ie/Memorials-Detail?memoId=368>: accessed 5 December 2014

²¹ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 3 December 2014), entry for Edith Watts, District: Pontefract, County: Yorkshire, Volume: 2C, Page: 389

²² Family source, 3 December 2014

²³ Photograph courtesy of Richard Watts' granddaughter, Valerie Rushton, 26 February 2015