

## Private Harry Oldham

Regimental number: 41134

8th Battalion, King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment)

born: 1899 - died: 20 July 1918

Private Harry Oldham was probably born in the spring of 1899 in Huddersfield, Yorkshire.<sup>1</sup> He was the only child of Saville and Mary Oldham, of Berry Brow in Yorkshire. Both Harry's parents were born in about 1864 – his father in Huddersfield and his mother in Lepton, Yorkshire. His father was the son of Job Oldham, a shoemaker, and his mother was the daughter of Harry Walshaw, a foreman.<sup>2</sup> Saville and Mary were married in the parish church in Armitage Bridge, West Yorkshire, on 19 October 1892.<sup>3</sup> Saville was initially a wool dyer<sup>4</sup> but, by 1911, he was a lamplighter and the family was living at 34 School Lane in Berry Brow. Harry's mother probably died the following year, when Harry was about 13.<sup>5</sup>

Harry enlisted in the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion<sup>6</sup> of the King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment) in Huddersfield. At the beginning of the war the King's Own was made up of two Regular and two Territorial and a Special Reserve Battalion. By the end of the war it had expanded to seventeen battalions, ten of which had seen active service. During the war over 44,000 men served with the Regiment, of whom nearly 7,000 died. The 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion was raised from volunteers in 1914 and served on the Western Front.<sup>7</sup> Harry likely did not join the Battalion until somewhat later.



20 July 1918 started out as a fine day. The 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion had moved off the Front Line the week before and was stationed in Support. There was heavy rain in the afternoon and the Battalion Headquarters received "Hostile Artillery attention." This was perhaps where Harry was injured. He admitted on 20 July to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with multiple wounds to his feet, shoulder, and right hand and leg and a compound fracture of his knee.<sup>8</sup> He did not survive long. He died the same day and was buried that day in the Pernes British Military Cemetery (Grave 8, Plot 5, Row F). The chaplain A. D. Reid presided.

Harry was just 19 years old. His father, Saville, received the monies owing to him from the army after his death.<sup>9</sup> He had now probably lost both his wife and his only child. Saville probably continued to live in Berry Brow until his death in 1954.<sup>10</sup>

On the day he was admitted, Harry was one of 148 admissions to the 1<sup>st</sup> CCCS and one of 39 to die there in the month of July.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the over 1,000 First World War soldiers buried in the Pernes British Military Cemetery died at one of the nearby clearing stations.<sup>12</sup> This cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.

Harry was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).<sup>13</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 21 May 2015), entry for Harry Oldham, Registration district: Huddersfield, Inferred County: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9a, Page: 306
- <sup>2</sup> "West Yorkshire, England, Marriages and Banns, 1813-1935," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 7 June 2015), entry for Saville Oldham
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 22 May 2015), entry for Savile Oldham, Registration district: Huddersfield, Sub registration district: Almondbury ED, institution, or vessel: 17, Piece: 3563, Folio: 140, Page Number: 11
- <sup>5</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 2015), entry for Mary A. Oldham, Registration district: Rotherham, Inferred County: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9c, Page: 649
- <sup>6</sup> The record in the journal of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station suggests that he served in the 18<sup>th</sup> Battalion, but all other army records indicated that he was in the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion.
- <sup>7</sup> "Regimental History - 20th Century," King's Own Royal Regiment Museum Lancaster (<http://www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com/ww1.htm>; accessed 7 June 2015)
- <sup>8</sup> "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 629
- <sup>9</sup> "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 21 May 2015), entry for Harry Oldham
- <sup>10</sup> "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 2015), entry for Saville Oldham, Registration district: Huddersfield, Inferred County: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 2b, Page: 693; "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966." *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 17 December 2015), entry for Saville Oldham
- <sup>11</sup> "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing 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](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))
- <sup>12</sup> "Pernes British Military Cemetery" *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>; accessed 13 January 2015)
- <sup>13</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 21 May 2015), entry for Harry Oldham