

Private William Leach
Regimental Number: 380465
71st Labour Company

born: 1898 - died: 27 May 1918

William Leach was the son of William and Margaret Leach of Padiham, Lancashire.¹ His father, William, was the son of Fielden and Hannah (Anna) Leach and was born in about 1866 in Over Darwen, Lancashire.² William probably married Margaret Thompson (born in Blackburn in about 1868)³ on 5 May 1889 in the parish of St Matthew's, Blackburn.⁴ Although he was only 23, William was a widower when he married Margaret. It is possible that he had married Mary Ann Galloway in autumn of 1885⁵ near Blackburn and that she died in the spring of 1887 at the age of 21,⁶ without having had any children.

After their marriage, William and Margaret stayed in Blackburn where William was a cotton weaver.⁷ William and Margaret had thirteen children.⁸ At least seven children were born when they were living in Blackburn: John (born in 1891),⁹ Beatrice (born in 1893),¹⁰ James (born 1895, but who died a few months later),¹¹ Joseph (born in 1896),¹² William (born in 1898),¹³ Alfred (born in 1900 but who died a few months later),¹⁴ and Charles (born in about 1902).¹⁵ The family then moved a few miles away to Padiham, where at least four more children were born: Margaret (born in 1904),¹⁶ Robert (born in 1906),¹⁷ Mary (born in 1908)¹⁸ and Elsie Leach (born in 1910).¹⁹



W. Leach in Pernes British Military Cemetery
(Source: Author, July 2015)

In 1911, the Leaches were living at 2 Back Green Street, Padiham.²⁰ William, the son, was a cotton reacher and attending school half-time. For several generations, the Leaches had worked in the textile industry in Lancashire. With the industrial revolution, textile manufacturing moved from homes to factories and the industry grew quickly in the 19th century,²¹ particularly in Lancashire which became a centre for cotton manufacturing. By the mid-19th century, Lancashire dominated the textile world market. Members of the Leach family worked as reachers, weavers, drawers and warpers.

When William enlisted in 1917, at the age of 18, he was living as 23 Field Street, Padiham.²² He first enlisted as a Private in the Labour Corps in Burnley, Lancashire. Some records suggest that he also served in the Cheshire Regiment, but he was in the 71st Battalion of the Labour Corps when he was killed in action in 1918.²³ He was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 27 May 1918 and died the same day. No description of his injuries was provided. He was buried the following day in Pernes Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row C, Grave 50) with the chaplain, J. K. Tibbits presiding. He was a member of the Church of England.

On 27 May, 111 soldiers were admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, bringing the total number of patients to 444.²⁴ In the whole month of May, there were 115 deaths at this CCCS – more than in any of the other three and a half months that the 1st CCCS was in Pernes.

As his next-of-kin was not known to the 1st CCCS chaplain, his adjutant was notified of his death. However, the monies owing to him from the army after his death were sent to his father, William, in Padiham.²⁵ William was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁶

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¹ “1911 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for William Leach, Registration district: Burnley, Registration District Number: 472, Sub-registration district: Padiham, ED, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 24870

² “Lancashire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1911,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for William Leach, Reference Number: Pr 3145/1/1

³ “1911 England Census,” entry for William Leach

⁴ “Lancashire, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754-1936,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for William Leach. “England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for William Leach, Registration district: Blackburn, Inferred County: Lancashire, , Volume: 8e, Page: 537

⁵ “England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for William Leach, Registration district: Blackburn, Inferred County: Lancashire, , Volume: 8e, Page: 644

⁶ “England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for Mary Ann Leach, Registration district: Blackburn, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 267

⁷ “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for William Leach, Registration district: Blackburn, Sub-registration district: Blackburn Southern, ED, institution, or vessel: 22, Piece: 3913, Folio: 46, Page Number: 28, Household schedule number: 160

⁸ Eight of the thirteen children were alive in 1911 (“1911 England Census,” entry for William Leach). Birth information has been found for only eleven of the thirteen children.

⁹ “1891 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 January 2015), entry for William Leach, Registration district: Blackburn, Sub-registration district: Blackburn Southern, ED, institution, or vessel: 34, Piece: 3407, Folio: 87, Page Number: 20

¹⁰ “Lancashire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1911,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for Beatrice Leach, Reference Number: Pr 3081/1/2

¹¹ “Lancashire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1911,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for James Leach, Reference Number: Pr 3075/1/1; “England & Wales deaths 1837-2007,” *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for James Leach, District: Blackburn, County: Lancashire, Volume: 8E, Page: 326

¹² “Lancashire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1911,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for Joseph Leach, Reference Number: Pr 3081/1/11

¹³ “Lancashire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1911,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for William Leach, Reference Number: Pr 3081/1/11

¹⁴ “Lancashire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1911,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for Alfred Leach, Reference Number: Pr 3081/1/11; “England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 January 2015), entry for Alfred Leach, Registration district: Blackburn, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 274

¹⁵ “1911 England Census,” entry for William Leach

¹⁶ “Lancashire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1911,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 January 2015), entry for Margaret Leach, Reference Number: Pr 3109/1/3

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- ¹⁷ "Lancashire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1911," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 29 January 2015), entry for Robert Leach, Reference Number: Pr 3109/1/3
- ¹⁸ "Lancashire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1911," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 29 January 2015), entry for Mary Leach, Reference Number: Pr 3109/1/3
- ¹⁹ "Lancashire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1911," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 29 January 2015), entry for Elsie Leach, Reference Number: Pr 3109/1/4
- ²⁰ "1911 England Census," entry for William Leach
- ²¹ "The Lancashire Census" (<http://www.lancashirecensus.co.uk/facts.htm>; accessed 12 January 2015)
- ²² "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 29 January 2015), entry for William Leach
- ²³ "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 IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 526
- ²⁴ "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=FINN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 15 December 2014)
- ²⁵ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 29 January 2015), entry for William Leach
- ²⁶ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 26 November 2014), entry for William Leach