

Private John Pottinger
Regimental number: 16949
4th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers

born: about 1893 - died: 4 May 1916

Private John Pottinger, born in Reading, Berkshire in about 1893,¹ was the son of Henry and Calvina Pottinger.² Henry was born in about 1857 in Wantage, Berkshire and Calvina (the former Calvina Cocks) in about 1860 in Cholsey, also in Berkshire. Henry and Calvina were married near Reading in the summer of 1878³ and they had six children, all of whom survived childhood:⁴ George (born in about 1879), Elizabeth (born in about 1882), Annie (born in about 1884), Harry (born in about 1886), John and his twin brother, William (born in about 1893).⁵

John's father, Henry, was a tin labourer. In 1881, the family was living at 55 Carnarvon Road in Reading and was sharing a house with Calvina's mother, Phyllis Cocks and Calvina's brother, John.⁶ In 1891, the family had moved to 27 Pill Street, still in Reading.⁷ Then in 1901, they were at Vine Cottage, 74, Sherman Road, Reading.⁸ From at least 1891, until her death in 1903,⁹ John's grandmother, Phyllis Cocks lived with the family.

In 1911, John had left home and was a boarder in the home of Elizabeth Cole at 97 Commercial Road, Swindon in Wiltshire, where he was working as a grocer's assistant.¹⁰

He enlisted as a Private in the 4th Battalion of the London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers) in Reading and probably joined the British Expeditionary Force in France sometime after the beginning of 1916.¹¹

In late April 1916, the 4th Battalion was stationed near Metern in northern France.¹² At the end of April, the Battalion was in the trenches where there was heavy shelling by trench mortars and guns. This continued into early May. On 3 May, the enemy trench mortars were very active and one soldier was killed and six wounded during the day. Eight more were wounded the following day. Perhaps John was one of those wounded at the end of April and beginning of May as he died of wounds to his back and abdomen on 4 May at the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station.¹³ On the 4th, two patients died at the 1st CCCS. Perhaps John was one of them.¹⁴

John was a member of the Church of England.¹⁵ He was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot II, Row D, Grave 6).¹⁶ Bailleul is in France, close to the Belgian border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several Casualty Clearing Stations, including the 1st Canadian, were quartered there for considerable periods. The earliest Commonwealth burials at Bailleul were made in April 1915. An extension was built and burials continued until April 1918, and occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when graves were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.¹⁷

A letter was sent to his mother at 74 Sherman Road in Reading to notify her of his death.¹⁸ She also received the monies owing to him from the army following his death.¹⁹

John was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁰

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- ¹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 28 September 2015), entry for John Pottinger, Registration district: Reading, Inferred County: Berkshire, Volume: 2c, Page: 376
- ² "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 September 2015), entry for John Pottinger, Registration district: Reading, Sub-registration district: St. Giles, ED, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 1149, Folio: 78, Page Number: 40, Household schedule number: 243
- ³ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 September 2015), entry for Henry Pottinger, Registration district: Reading, Inferred County: Berkshire, Volume: 2c, Page: 629
- ⁴ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 5 January 2015), entry for Henry Pottenger, Registration district: Reading, Registration District Number: 121, Sub-registration district: St. Giles, ED, institution, or vessel: 3, Household schedule number: 303, Piece: 6582
- ⁵ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 28 September 2015), entry for Henry Paltruger, Registration district: Reading, ED, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 995, Folio: 63, Page Number: 29; "1901 England Census," entry for John Pottinger
- ⁶ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 September 2015), entry for Henry Pottinger, Registration district: Reading, ED, institution, or vessel: 17, Piece: 1309, Folio: 37, Page Number: 4
- ⁷ "1891 England Census," entry for Henry Paltruger
- ⁸ "1901 England Census," entry for John Pottinger
- ⁹ Phyllis d GRO "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 28 September 2015), entry for Phyllis Cocks, Registration district: Reading, Inferred County: Berkshire, Volume: 2c, Page: 214
- ¹⁰ John 1911 census "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 5 January 2015), entry for John Pottinger, Registration district: Swindon, Registration District Number: 240, Sub-registration district: Swindon, ED, institution, or vessel: 32, Household schedule number: 50, Piece: 11798
- ¹¹ He was not awarded the 1914-15 Star, which was awarded for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915). This suggests that he did not join the theatre of war until after the end of 1915.
- ¹² "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 8 September 2015), Regiment or Unit: Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment), Sub Unit: 4th Battalion, Division: 3rd Division, Diary Entry Start Date: 1914, Diary Dates: 1914 Jan 1 - 1915 Dec 31, Piece Description: Piece 1431/1-3: 9 Infantry Brigade: 4 Battalion Royal Fusiliers (1914 Aug - 1919 Apr), Piece Number: 1431
- ¹³ "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 84
- ¹⁴ "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; accessed 17 June 2015)
- ¹⁵ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 84
- ¹⁶ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," (www.cwgc.org; accessed 2 September 2015), entry for Pottinger, John, Service No: 16949
- ¹⁷ "Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000047/Bailleul%20Communal%20Cemetery.%20Nord>; accessed 5 August 2015)
- ¹⁸ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 84
- ¹⁹ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 September 2015), entry for John Pottinger
- ²⁰ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 12 September 2015), entry for John Pottinger