

Sapper Edward Pennington¹©

Regimental number: 2075

Royal Engineers (1/1st Northumbrian Field Company)

Born: 28 December 1897 – Died: 31 May 1916

Edward Pennington's father was a Royal Engineer,² so it is not surprising that he enlisted in the Royal Engineers at Newcastle upon Tyne³ when war was declared in 1914.⁴

Sapper Edward Pennington was the eldest child of Mary Ann Crawly and Edward Wilson Pennington. He was born on 28 December 1897 in Newcastle upon Tyne, Northumberland, England,⁵ and baptised on 2 February 1898 as "Edvardus" in the Latin tradition of the Roman Catholic faith.⁶

His father, Edward Wilson Pennington, was born in Barnsbury, London, England, in 1853 and baptised 30 October 1853 at Holy Trinity, Church of England, Islington, the son of Margaret Wilson and Edward Walker Pennington.⁷ At the age of 24, he enlisted in the British Army, Royal Engineers.⁸ In 1881 he was studying at the School of Military Engineering in Chatham, Kent.⁹ Ten years later, he had retired from the military, was working at the Brass Founder Engine Works and living with his mother in Newcastle upon Tyne.¹⁰

Edward Pennington's mother, Mary Ann Crawley, was born in 1867 in Gateshead, Durham, England,¹¹ which was situated on the south side of the Tyne River opposite Newcastle. She was the daughter of John and Ann Crawley, both of whom had been born in Ireland. In 1881, her father was employed as a chemical labourer and Mary Ann was attending school in Gateshead.¹² Ten years later, Mary Ann was working as a cook for the Richardson family at Orchard House in Gateshead.¹³ Somehow she met Edward Wilson Pennington and married him in 1896,¹⁴ probably at St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Gateshead, where Edward Wilson Pennington was received into the Roman Catholic faith on January 8, 1896.¹⁵

The couple had four other children: John (12 August 1899),¹⁶ Mary Ann (31 January 1902),¹⁷ Andrew (10 November 1903)¹⁸ and Joseph (26 April 1907).¹⁹ In the decade between 1901 and 1911, the family changed households and Edward Wilson Pennington changed jobs. In 1901, he continued to be employed at the Brass Founder Engine Works and the family was living at 10 Bronte Street, Gateshead.²⁰ In 1911, he was working as a labourer in the General Water Company and the family was living at 70 Old Fold Road, Gateshead.²¹ In 1914, the family had moved to 18 Park Road,²² the same street on which Mary Ann had lived in 1881. There must have been a touch of sadness in the home. Their son Andrew was not listed in the 1911 Census, and son, John, who was a patient at the Children's Hospital, Gateshead, in 1911²³ died 16 August 1915, four days after his 16th birthday.²⁴



Pennington, Edward. "Gateshead, Durham England War Honours Scrapbook 1914–1920" *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 November 2016), entry for E. Pennington, Volume 2, N-W

The 1/1st Northumbrian Field Company, Royal Engineers that Edward Pennington had joined was part of England's peace time Territorial Force. When war was declared, it was mobilized on 5

August 1914 and assigned to the 28th Division from December 1914 to June 1915 and then the 50th Division to the end of the war.²⁵ It sailed from Southampton to join the British Expeditionary Force on the 8 January 1915 with 239 men in the unit: 5 officers, 7 sergeants, 2 trumpeters, 43 drivers, 155 sappers and others. The company had 79 horses, 15 vehicles and 32 bicycles.²⁶ Arriving at Le Havre, France, on 19 January 1915, the company marched first to Vlamertinghe and then on to Ypres, Belgium. There the unit was employed digging, enlarging and uniting trenches and establishing communication lines. On 11 February 1915, a shell burst killed four men and five horses.²⁷ A lieutenant fatally injured by a sniper's bullet was buried on the rampart on which he had died.²⁸ By the end of March, approximately 7 men had died and 27 had been wounded.²⁹ On 27 April 1915 a Captain recorded: "In general the men are well and in good spirits, taking into consideration the fact that they have been for some days under shell fire day and night."³⁰ After 31 May 1915, the activities of the Royal Engineers (1/1st Northumbrian Field Company) were mentioned only briefly in the available war diaries for the 50th Division, which moved back into the Ypres Salient in December 1915. This meant more intense trench warfare, with the divisional engineers and signallers constantly engaged in repairing defences and communications.³¹

Sapper Edward Pennington survived for a year and five months at the front before he was fatally injured. He might have been injured in the German offensive to retake Vimy Ridge, which commenced 21 May 1916; losses to the British forces between 21 and 24 May 1916 in this sector totalled 2,500 men.³² He might have been wounded during one of the daily bombardments or sniper attacks. He was taken to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station where he died on 31 May 1916. He was buried as "E. Pennington" at Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Extension Nord, Grave/Memorial Reference II. A. 4. His age was listed as 22³³ although he was really only 18 years and 5 months old. His death, along with 11 other men from the North East England area, was reported under the "Roll of Honour, Casualties in North Country Regiments" byline, *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 9 June 1916.³⁴ His father was sent his back pay on 14 August 1916—14 pounds, 10 shillings and 5 pence.³⁵ Later he was awarded the three standard World War 1 medals: the Victory, the British War and the 1914/15 Star.³⁶

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¹ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 – 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No.1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2012 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 109. There is a problem with this entry. No first name is given and the Service No. 2775 does not match with a Pennington. Other official documents and sources verify that this entry recorded the death of Sapper Edward Pennington, Service No. 2075, and that other information in the entry matched his description. His next of kin, his mother, lived in Gateshead, England. He was a Roman Catholic and his death was reported in official documents and other sources as 31 May 1916.

² "UK Royal Hospital Chelsea Pensioner Soldier Service Record 1760–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 26 November 2016), entry for Edward Wilson Pennington, Regimental number 16114, WO 97, Piece 1278-4287. Note: I am almost certain that this is his father—the name "Edward Wilson Pennington," birthdate and place of birth match.

³ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry*, (www.ancestry.com: accessed 14 November 2016), Original data: *British and Irish Military Databases*. The Naval and Military Press Ltd., entry for Edward Pennington

⁴ Note: The Attestation file for Edward Pennington was not available. He most likely joined in the fall of 1914. According to an article in *Wikipedia*, later recruits for the 1st Northumbrian Field Company were assigned to the 2nd and later the 3rd line of the 1st Northumbrian Field Company in "50th (Northumbrian Division)" *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/50th_\(Northumbrian\)_Division](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/50th_(Northumbrian)_Division) accessed 2 December 2016

⁵ "England and Wales Birth Registration Index, 1837–2008," *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed 2 December 2016) entry for Edward Pennington

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- ⁶ "England Births and Christenings, 1538–1975," *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed 1 December 2016), entry for Edvardus Pennington, Indexing project (batch) number: C01127-3, System origin: England-ODM, GS Film number 1936950
- ⁷ "London, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813–1906," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 November 2016) entry for Edward Wilson Pennington
- ⁸ "UK Royal Hospital Chelsea Pensioner Soldier Service Record 1760–1920" *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 26 November 2016), entry for Edward Wilson Pennington, Regimental number 16114, WO 97, Piece 1278-4287
- ⁹ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 28 November 2016), entry for Edward Pennington, Registration district: Medway, Sub-registration district: Gillingham, Enumeration district, institution or vessel: School of Military Engineering 3, Piece: 897, Folio 49, Page number: 4
- ¹⁰ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 13 December 2016), entry for Edward Pennington, Registration district: Newcastle Upon Tyne, ED, institution, or vessel: 13, Piece 4214, Folio: 86, Page number 19
- ¹¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 13 December 2016), entry for Mary Ann Crawley, Registration district: Gateshead, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10n, Page 641
- ¹² "1881 England, Wales & Scotland Census" *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 18 November 2016), entry for Mary Ann Crawley, Registration district: Gateshead, Archive: RG11, Piece: 5038, Folio: 111, Page: 35
- ¹³ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 13 December 2016), entry for Mary A Crawley, Registration district: Gateshead, ED, institution, or vessel: 59, Piece: 4185, Folio: 105 Page: 3
- ¹⁴ "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 8 November 2016), entry for Mary Ann Crawley, District: Gateshead, County: Durham, Volume:10A, Page: 1081
- ¹⁵ "England Births and Christenings 1538–1975." *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed 28 November 2016), entry for Edwardus [sic]Wilson Pennington, Indexing Project (Batch) Number: C04284-4, System Origin: England-ODM, GS film number: 2046500
- ¹⁶ "England Births and Christenings 1538-1975." *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed 25 November 2016), entry for Joannes [sic] Pennington, Indexing project (batch) number: C04284-4, System Origin: England-EASy, GS Film number: 2046500, Reference ID: p 52
- ¹⁷ "England Births and Christenings 1538–1975." *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed 25 November 2016), entry for Maria Anna Pennington, Indexing project (batch) number: C04302-9, System origin: England-EASy, GS Film number: 2046500, Reference ID: p 312
- ¹⁸ "England Births and Christenings 1538-1975." *Family Search* (www.familysearch.org: accessed 25 November 2016), entry for Andreas Pennington, Indexing project (batch) number: C00965-1, System origin: England-EASy, GS Film number: 2046477, Reference ID: Item 1 P18
- ¹⁹ "England Births and Christenings 1538–1975." *Family Search* (www.familysearch.org: accessed 25 November 2016), entry for Joseph Pennington, Indexing project (batch) number: C00965-1, System origin: England-EASy, GS Film number: 2046477, Reference ID: Item 1 P95
- ²⁰ "1901 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 01 November 2016), entry for Edward Pennington, Registration district: Gateshead, Archive reference: RG13, Piece number: 4758, Folio: 12, Page: 16
- ²¹ "1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 1 November 2016), entry for Edward Pennington, Registration district: Gateshead, Registration district number: 557, Enumeration district: 42, Sub-district: Gateshead, Sub-district number 2, Piece number: 30452
- ²² "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 – 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No.1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2012 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIIC10, volume 4556, Record number 109

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- ²³ "1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 1 November 2016), entry for John Pennington, Registration district: Gateshead, Registration district number: 557, Enumeration district: 65, Sub district: Gateshead, Sub district number 2, Piece number: 30475
- ²⁴ "Copy of an entry of death," *General Register Office* (www.gro.gov.uk: accessed 26 November 2016), entry for John Pennington, GRO Reference 1915, S Quarter in Gateshead, Volume 10A, Page 977
- ²⁵ "50th (Northumbrian) Division," *Long, Long Trail The British Army in the Great War of 1914-1918* (www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/order-of-battle-of-divisions/50th-northumbrian-division: accessed 19 November 2016)
- ²⁶ "UK, WW1 War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany 1914–1920" *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 3 December 2016), 28th Division, Piece 2272/2: 1/1 Northumbrian Field Company, Royal Engineers (1915 Jan – May), entry for 18 January 1915
- ²⁷ *Ibid.* Entry for 11 February 1915
- ²⁸ *Ibid.* Entry for 6 March 1915
- ²⁹ *Ibid.* Author tabulated the casualties listed in the diary to the end of March 1915
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* Entry for 27 April 1915
- ³¹ "50th (Northumbrian) division [Open Access articles]," *OMICS International* (research.omicsgroup.org: accessed 17 December 2016), entry for 2.6 Engineers, entry for 446th (1st Northumbrian) Field Company, Contents 3. World War 1, 3.3 50th Division
- ³² "Actions in the Spring 1916 (Western Front)," *Long, Long Trail The British Army in the Great War of 1914-1918* (www.longlongtrail.co.uk/battles/battles-of-the-western-front-in-france-and-flanders/actions-in-the-spring-of-1916-western-front: accessed 22 November 2016)
- ³³ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 30 November 2016), entry for Pennington, E, Service number: 2075
- ³⁴ "The Roll of Honour" *The Newcastle Daily Journal*, Friday June 9, 1915, *Findmypast* (findmypast.co.uk/bna: accessed 8 November 2016)
- ³⁵ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929" *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 November 2016), entry for Edward Pennington
- ³⁶ "World War One British Army medal index cards" *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 1 November 2016), entry for Edward Pennington