

Private Frank Wilkinson®
Regimental Number: 40403
1st Battalion, Cameron Highlanders

born: 25 September 1897 – died: 19 April 1918

Frank Wilkinson was born on 25 September 1896 in Bolton Woods, Yorkshire, England, to Emily Child and John Edward Wilkinson.¹ John had married Emily on 22 April 1889 in the Parish of Botton, Yorkshire. John, 24, was a weaving overlooker, while his father Ben Wilkinson was a stone mason. Emily was 26 and her father Edwin Child was a quarry owner.² Frank had one older brother, William Child Wilkinson, who was born on 19 April 1891 in Bolton Woods.³

The 1901 census shows that the Wilkinson family was living in Bradford where John was still an overlooker in a weaving factory.⁴ Sadly, just months later, on 20 July 1901, John died⁵ leaving Emily to raise two young boys, aged 4 and 9, by herself.

In the spring of 1904, Emily remarried Joseph Whitaker Rycroft in North Bierley, Yorkshire.⁶ Joseph was born 13 August 1853 in Bradford and was a widower.⁷ In the summer of 1880 he had married Elizabeth⁸ and they had had two children: Harold, who was born in 1882 and Elizabeth, who was born in 1884. It appears that Elizabeth Sr. died sometime before 1901 leaving Joseph, a wool carter, to raise two teenagers.⁹

By the 1911 census, Joseph's two children were independent, but Emily's boys, then teenagers, were living with them in Bolton Woods. Joseph was a wool sorter for a wool merchant, William was a letter press machine man and Frank was a clerk in a textile dyeworks.¹⁰

Both Frank and his brother William enlisted in the British Army to fight the Great War, but with different regiments; sadly, both were killed, leaving their mother bereaved. Regrettably, only about 30% of UK service records still exist due to a fire resulting from a 1940 air raid on the Army Records Office in Walworth, London,¹¹ and it appears that neither brother's records were saved. As a result, certain specifics of their military experience were not obtainable.

Frank's war gratuity of £10 10s¹² suggests that he had enlisted in December 1915, while William's war gratuity of £8 10s¹³ suggests that he had enlisted a few months later, in April 1916. The war gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men (or their estates) who had served in WW I for a period of at least six months or for home service for any length of time if the man had served overseas.¹⁴

William was the first son to die, on 3 May 1917. His regimental number was 18/867 and he was with the 18th Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own).¹⁵

Frank had enlisted at Bradford with the 1st Battalion, Cameron Highlanders (Queen's Own).¹⁶ In 1916 this Battalion fought in the Battles of the Somme, and in 1917 they took part in the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line and the Third Battle of Ypres. They were in action in the Battle of Lys in April 1918¹⁷ when Frank, then 21 years old, was fatally wounded with gunshot wounds to his buttock and legs. He was buried the next day in Pernes British Military Cemetery, Plot 1, Row C, Grave 22 with Robert K. Lambert, Chaplain, presiding.¹⁸

The grave marker includes the inscription:

NOT LOST BUT GONE BEFORE¹⁹

Pernes British Cemetery was not opened until April 1918, when the 1st and 4th Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations pulled back to Pernes, driven back by the German advance in Flanders. There are 1,098 First World War burials in Pernes.²⁰

After losing first her husband, then both of her sons, Emily also suffered the loss of her second husband in March 1927,²¹ passing away herself in March 1943 at the age of 79.²²

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¹ "West Yorkshire, Non-Conformist Records, 1646–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 October 2017), entry for Frank Wilkinson, Parish or Chapel: Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Bolton Woods; Reference Number 56D78/2A/1A

² "West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1813–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 October 2017), entry for Emily Child, Parish: Bolton, St. James

³ "West Yorkshire, Non-Conformist Records, 1646–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 October 2017), entry for William Child Wilkinson, Parish or Chapel: Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Bolton Woods; Reference Number 56D78/2A/1A

⁴ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 October 2017), entry for Emily Wilkinson, Registration district: Bradford, Sub-registration district: Bradford East, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 30, Household schedule number: 193, Piece: 4150, Folio: 210, Page: 30

⁵ "UK and Ireland, Find A Grave Index, 1300s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 October 2017), entry for John Edward Wilkinson

⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 October 2017), entry for Joseph Whitaker Rycroft, Registration district: North Bierley, Inferred county: Yorkshire West, Volume: 9b, Page: 448

⁷ "West Yorkshire, Non-Conformist Records, 1646–1985," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 October 2017), entry for Joseph Whittaker Rycroft, Parish or Chapel: Idle

⁸ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 October 2017), entry for Joseph Whitaker Rycroft, Registration district: Skipton, Inferred county: Yorkshire West, Volume: 9a, Page: 69

⁹ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 October 2017), entry for Joseph E Rycroft, Registration district: Bradford, Sub-registration district: Bradford West, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 70, Household schedule number: 23, Piece: 4163, Folio: 194, Page: 4

¹⁰ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 October 2017), entry for Emily Rycroft, Registration district: Bradford, Registration district number: 498, Sub-registration district: Manningham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 47, Piece: 26810

¹¹ "How to research a soldier," *The Long, Long Trail, The British Army in the Great War of 1914–1918* (<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/how-to-research-a-soldier/>: accessed 30 May 2017)

¹² "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 October 2017), entry for Frank Wilkinson

¹³ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 6 October 2017), entry for William Child Wilkinson

¹⁴ "What was the war gratuity?" *The war gratuities of WWI* (<https://wargratiuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/what-was-the-war-gratuity/>: accessed 6 October 2017)

¹⁵ "UK, Commonwealth War Graves, 1914–1921 and 1939–1947," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 November 2017), entry for William Child Wilkinson

¹⁶ See Endnote 12

¹⁷ "1st Battalion, Cameron Highlanders (Queens Own)," Wartime Memories Project (<http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/battalion.php?pid=6853>: accessed 17 November 2017)

¹⁸ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 17 November 2017), entry for Wilkinson, F.

¹⁹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 17 November 2017), entry for Wilkinson, F., Service No: 40403

²⁰ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 6 October 2017), entry for Lea, E., Service No: 260299

²¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 November 2017), entry for Joseph W Rycroft, Registration district: Bradford, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9b, Page: 372

²² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 November 2017), entry for Emily Rycroft, Registration district: Bradford, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9b, Page: 178