

Private Henry Shilleto Proctor[©]
Regimental Number: 26697
1st Battalion, Loyal North Lancaster Regiment

born: February 1887 – died: 19 April 1918

Henry Shilleto Proctor was born in Sunderland, Durham, England, in February 1887¹ to Robert Proctor and Eliza Shilleto. They had been married during the last quarter of 1875 in Sunderland.² Robert was a bricklayer, a profession that Henry subsequently took up. Robert and Eliza had six children over a period of 21 years: Elizabeth, who was born in 1876; Robert, who was born in 1878; Isabella, who was born in 1882; Henry; Eliza, who was born in 1891; and Marion, who was born in 1897.³

In 1911, the four youngest children were still living at home in Sunderland, and Henry, then 24, was working as a bricklayer—likely with his father.⁴ Elizabeth was living nearby with, and probably caring for, her widowed paternal grandfather, John Proctor, who was a retired boat and house builder.⁵ Robert was also living nearby with his wife of two years, Isabella Lewthwaite. Sadly, they had lost one child. Robert, like his brother and father, was a house bricklayer.⁶

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,⁷ but it appears that Henry's records were mainly rescued.

On 13 January 1916, at the age of almost 29 and still single, Henry enlisted for the duration of the war in the Army Reserve, 8th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry. Henry was quite short, only 5'3". During his initial medical examination he complained about his ankle, which had apparently been fractured at some time, but it was determined to be normal in all respects. He embarked for the Front at Folkestone on 18 July 1916, disembarking at Boulogne, France, on the same day. By 5 September 1916, Henry had been transferred to the 1st Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.⁸

The 1st Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment had a long and distinguished history. Its war diary described the events that led to Henry's death. The battalion had just relieved the 1st Gloucester in the defence of Le Preol and on 16 April 1918 had moved into the La Bassee Canal sector at Givenchy. On the 18th, at 4:15 a.m. the enemy commenced an intense bombardment of the front lines. At 8:10 a.m., under cover of the resulting smoke, the enemy succeeded in filtering into the trenches, reaching and occupying the main line of resistance before countermeasures could be taken. This was met by vigorous counterattacks by companies C and D, which eventually succeeded in ejecting the enemy from the main line such that by 11:00 a.m. the enemy was only holding a few isolated outposts.⁹

However, it was on 18 April that Henry received gunshot wounds to his right elbow and face. He was transported to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station that day but succumbed to his injuries the next day. He was buried on 19 April at the Pernes British Military Cemetery in Plot 1, Row C, Grave 26 with the Reverend d'Easum officiating. He was 31 years old. It appears that the chaplain may have incorrectly identified Henry as having a wife, but no evidence of his marriage was found.¹⁰ While a photo of his grave marker was not obtained, the grave bears the additional quote selected by his mother:

BY LOVE
SERVE ONE ANOTHER
SUNDERLAND¹¹

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.¹²

Henry's medals, the British War Medal and the Allied Victory Medal, were provided to his mother.¹³ The British War Medal was issued to men of the British and Imperial Forces who entered a theatre of war between 5 August 1914 and 11 November 1918. It was a silver medal, the front of which depicts the head of George V. The recipient's service number, rank, name and unit were impressed on the rim. The Allied Victory Medal is bronze, depicting a winged classical figure representing victory. It was similarly inscribed on the rim with the recipient's service number, rank, name and unit.¹⁴

Henry's mother received his outstanding military pay of £8 19s and 7d and his war gratuity of £8 10s. At the request of Henry's brother Robert, their sister Isabella received a small bequest as well.¹⁵ The war gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men who had served in WWI for a period of at least six months or for home service for any length of time if the man had served overseas.¹⁶

Sadly, Henry's father Robert died just months before Henry, on 1 December 1917. His will was probated just weeks prior to Henry's death, on 27 March 1918, and he left his estate (valued at almost £1950) to both sons, Henry and Robert.¹⁷ Interestingly, Henry's will was not finally probated until 26 March 1938, with the final bequest to Henry's brother Robert of £254 3s 4s.¹⁸ It appears to have been probated at the same time as his mother's estate. Eliza had died 30 December 1937, leaving her small estate to her two spinster daughters, Elizabeth and Isabella.¹⁹

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¹ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 November 2017), entry for Henry Shilleto Proctor

² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 November 2017), entry for Eliza Shilleto, Registration district: Sunderland, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 768

³ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 November 2017), entry for Eliza Proctor, Registration district: Sunderland, Sub-registration district: Monkwearmouth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 11, Household schedule number: 84, Piece: 4722, Folio: 150, Page: 14

⁴ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 November 2017), entry for Henry Shillito [*sic*] Proctor, Registration district: Sunderland, Registration district number: 555, Sub-registration district: Sunderland North, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 17, Piece: 30229

⁵ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 November 2017), entry for Elizabeth Proctor, Registration district: Sunderland, Registration district number: 555, Sub-registration district: Sunderland East, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 6, Piece: 30187

⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 23 November 2017), entry for Robert Proctor, Registration district: Sunderland, Registration district number: 555, Sub-registration district: Sunderland West, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 30145

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- ⁷ "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)
- ⁸ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 28 November 2017), entry for Henry Shilleto Proctor
- ⁹ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 6 October 2017), Regiment or Unit: Loyal North Lancashire, Sub-unit: 1st Battalion, Division: 1st Division, Diary entry start date: 1918, Diary dates: 1918 Feb–1919 Apr, Piece description: Piece 1266/1: 1 Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (1918 Feb–1919 Apr), Piece number: 1266
- ¹⁰ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 6 October 2017), entry for Proctor, H.S.
- ¹¹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 28 November 2017), entry for Proctor, H.S., Service No: 26697
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 6 October 2017), entry for Henry Shilleto Proctor
- ¹⁴ "A Guide to British Campaign Medals of WW1," *The Great War 1914–1918*, (<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/medals/ww1-campaign-medals.htm>: accessed 20 December 2016)
- ¹⁵ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 28 November 2017), entry for Henry Thilleto [sic] Proctor
- ¹⁶ "What was the war gratuity?" *The war gratuities of WWI* (<https://wargratuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/what-was-the-war-gratuity/>: accessed 6 October 2017)
- ¹⁷ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1966," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 27 November 2017), entry for Robert Proctor
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, entry for Henry Shilleto Proctor
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, entry for Eliza Proctor