

Private Norman Pilling[©]

Regimental number: 37686

1st Battalion, King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment)

born: 9 April 1899 - died: 31 May 1918

Private Norman Pilling was the only son of John and Alice (nee Robinson) Pilling of Bury, Lancashire. He was born on 9 April 1899 and baptized just over a month later, on 17 May, at St. John's Church in Bury.¹ At the time, his father John, a labourer, and his mother were living at 56 Woodfield Terrace. His father was born in about 1873 in Heywood, Lancashire, and his mother in about 1871 in Bury. They had married in Bury two years earlier.²

In 1901, Norman and his parents were living at 28 Topping Street in Bury, where his father was a papermill labourer and his mother a cotton weaver. The textile industry had a long history in Bury, but, by the early 19th century, the cotton industry was the dominant textile industry in the town, facilitated by the presence of two rivers—the Roch and the Irwell—which provided power for the mills and water for processing. The industry continued to expand over the 19th century: there were seven cotton mills in Bury in the early part of the 19th century but, at the beginning of the 20th century, there were over 58,000. Among the other industries that flourished in Bury was paper-making—an industry that provided an occupation for Norman's father.³

In 1902, their daughter Lily was born.⁴ Nine years later, the whole family was now living at 25 Topping Street and Norman's father was a carpenter's labourer, working for a railway company. His mother was still a cotton weaver. Alice's sister Elizabeth Ann Robinson, also a cotton weaver, was living with the family.⁵ Alice and her siblings had grown up on Topping Street.⁶

Norman enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force in about May 1915⁷ in Bury.⁸ He served with the 1st Battalion of the King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment). His battalion was mobilized and landed at Boulogne in August 1914, but Norman probably did not join the Front until after the beginning of 1916.⁹ His battalion engaged in many key battles throughout the war, including, in 1918, battles in which Norman may have been engaged—the Battle of Bapaume and the First Battle of Arras.¹⁰

Norman probably survived for about three years on the Front before receiving gunshot wounds to his abdomen at the end of May 1918. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 30 May, where he died a day later. He was buried on 31 May in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row D, Grave No. 46) with the Canadian chaplain R. K. Lambert presiding.¹¹

Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCSs came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.¹² Norman was one of 198 injured soldiers admitted to No 1. CCCS on 30 May 1918. In total, there were nearly 4,000 soldiers admitted to this CCCS in the month of May and 115 died.¹³

His mother, who was his next of kin and then living at 36 Badger Street in Bury, was send a letter to notify her of her 19-year-old son's death. She received the monies owing to Norman by the army upon his death and she requested the following inscription for this gravestone:

THOUGH LOST TO SIGHT
TO MEMORY DEAR¹⁴

Norman was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).¹⁵

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¹ "Manchester, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Norman Pilling

² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2018), entry for John Pilling, Registration district: Bury, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8c, Page: 739

³ "Bury," *Wikipedia* (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bury>: accessed 31 May 2018)

⁴ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 November 2018), entry for Pilling, Lily, Registration district: Bury (Bury and Lancaster), Volume 08C, Page 609

⁵ "England and Wales Census, 1891," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:7HLL-WW2>: 10 December 2017), entry for Alice Robinson in household of John Robinson, Bury, Lancashire, England; from "1891 England, Scotland and Wales census," *Findmypast* (<http://www.findmypast.com>: n.d.); citing PRO RG 12, Lancashire county, subdistrict, The National Archives of the UK, Kew, Surrey

⁶ "England and Wales Census, 1881," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q27G-275G>: 11 December 2017), Alice Robinson in household of James Rostron, Bury, Lancashire, England; from "1881 England, Scotland and Wales Census," *Findmypast* (<http://www.findmypast.com>: n.d.); citing p. 16, Piece/Folio 3865/38, The National Archives, Kew, Surrey; FHL microfilm 101,775,105

⁷ Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Norman Pilling

⁸ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Norman Pilling

⁹ He was not awarded the 1914–15 Star, which was given for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915. ("British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Norman Pilling)

¹⁰ "Unit History: King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment)," *Forces War Records* (<https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/units/261/kings-own-royal-lancaster-regiment>: accessed 31 May 2018)

¹¹ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Pilling, N.

¹² "Pernes British Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 13 January 2015)

¹³ "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=FIN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 15 December 2014)

¹⁴ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Pilling, Norman, Service No: 37686

¹⁵ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 May 2018), entry for Norman Pilling