

Private William Thomas Woolley[©]

Regimental number: 260025

1st/5th Battalion, King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment)

born: 1898 - died: 13 May 1918

Private William Thomas Woolley was born in 1898 in St Olave, Southwark, London,¹ to Alfred Edward Wooley (also sometimes known as Frederick) and his wife, the former Clara Lakin. Both his parents were born in Birmingham, Warwickshire²—Alfred on 4 July 1864 and Clara on 17 October 1866.³ They married in King's Norton, Worcestershire, near Birmingham, in 1884⁴ and had 13 children—six daughters and seven sons. William's sisters were: Cecil Clair (born on 24 March 1887),⁵ Eveline Minnie (born on 22 September 1888),⁶ Beatrice (born in 1901),⁷ Mabel (born in 1903),⁸ Florence (born on 4 November 1907)⁹ and Dorothy (born in 1914).¹⁰ William had six brothers, but sadly two died at a very young age—Horace Percy (born on 22 January 1885),¹¹ Howard Eustace (born in 1890, but died when he was a few months old),¹² Frederick Frank (born in 1892),¹³ Albert Edward (born in 1894),¹⁴ Ernest Sidney (born in 1896, but died at the age of 2)¹⁵ and Sidney James (born in 1909).¹⁶

Alfred and Clara's first four children were born in King's Norton. It appears that, just after the birth of their son Howard Eustace, the family moved to London. In 1891, Alfred and Clara were living at 20 Camden Street in St. Mary Newington, London, where Alfred was a chocolate maker and grocer.¹⁷ Ten years later, the family was at 67 Silwood Street in Rotherhithe, near Southwark, and Alfred was known as Frederick.¹⁸ William was then their youngest child. In 1911, the family was at the same address and Alfred was still a chocolate moulder for a chocolate manufacturer.¹⁹

William enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force in London²⁰ in about August 1916²¹ and served with the King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment).²² He was with the 1st/5th Battalion when he died.²³

The battalion was raised in Lancaster in August 1914 and landed at Le Havre, France, on 15 February 1915.²⁴ In late April 1918, it was in the trenches near Béthune in northern France. On 25 April, there was the usual shelling around some of the companies' positions. That day the battalion was relieved by the 1st/5th and 1st/6th battalions of the South Staffordshire Regiment and William's battalion went into support near La Bassée. Unfortunately, William was probably not among those who went to La Bassée. He was wounded and admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 25 April with shrapnel wounds to his back and left arm.²⁵ He was one of only two soldiers admitted to No. 1 CCCS that day.²⁶ His wounds were not immediately fatal—he survived 18 days at the station. However, he succumbed to his wounds on 13 May and was buried the following day in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row B, Grave 49) with the Canadian chaplain J. K. Tibbits presiding.²⁷

This cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCSs came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.²⁸ A total of nearly 4,000 soldiers were admitted to No. 1 CCCS in May 1918 and 115 died.²⁹

His mother, who was living at 88 Percival Road, Bush Hill Park in Enfield, Middlesex, was William's next of kin and was notified of his death.³⁰ She had the following inscription placed on his gravestone:

FORGET HIM, NO
NOR NEVER WILL
WE LOVED HIM HERE
AND LOVE HIM STILL³¹

His father received the monies owing to William from the army upon his death.³²

William was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).³³

The loss of their son William must have been particularly devastating to his parents because they had lost another son just over a month before. Frederick Frank was serving with the 7th Battalion of the Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Regiment when he died on 7 April 1918.³⁴ Frederick enlisted in Guildford, Surrey, on 28 February 1916, at the age of 23—probably a few months before William enlisted. He joined the Front in July 1916 and survived for almost two years. He died at the 8th General Hospital in Rouen of gunshot wounds to his thigh and is buried in Bois-Guillaume Communal Cemetery Extension, just north of Rouen.³⁵ His mother included the same inscription on Frederick's gravestone as she did for his brother.³⁶

William's eldest brother, Horace, was serving in the army well before the Great War. He enlisted in the Royal Irish Regiment (regimental number: 7298) in April 1902 and served in South Africa from 1902 to 1905 and then in India from 1905 to 1910.³⁷ On 21 December 1912, he married Mary Rayment in Edmonton, Middlesex. He was discharged on 25 April 1914. Later in life, he became a trolley bus driver and, in 1939, was living with his wife and children at 75 Brunswick Park Road in East Barnet, Hertfordshire.³⁸

In the 1919 statement of relatives in Frederick's army service file, his parents and siblings are listed, all living at the same address. Horace, Cecil and Eveline are not mentioned—perhaps because they were no longer living at home with his parents. Horace had married in 1912 and his two sisters Cecil and Eveline had married brothers in 1910. Eveline married James George Bartillo Jay on 24 April 1910 at St Katherine's Church in Rotherhithe.³⁹ Cecil married James' older brother, Walter Albert Jay, on 20 August 1910 at the same church.⁴⁰ Sadly, Eveline's husband James died in the Great War in December 1915.⁴¹ In 1939, Cecil and Walter were living in Lewisham, Kent,⁴² and Eveline was living in Coulsdon and Purley Urban District in Surrey.⁴³

In 1939, William's parents were still living at 88 Percival Road in Enfield and his father was retired. Their daughter Florence was living with them.⁴⁴

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¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 25 February 2018) entry for Woolley, William Thomas, Registration district: St Olave Southwark, Volume 01D, Page 297

² "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2018), entry for Clara Wooley, Registration district: St Olave (Bermondsey), Registration district number: 24, Sub-registration district: Rotherhithe, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 16, Piece: 1929

³ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 21 February 2018), entry for Alfred E Woolley, Ref: RG101/0744G/017/29, Letter code: BEAI

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- ⁴ "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2005," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 21 February 2018), entry for Alfred Edward Woolley, District: Kings Norton, County: Worcestershire, Volume: 6C, Page: 631
- ⁵ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 25 February 2018) entry for Woolley, Cecil Clair, Registration district: Kings Norton, Volume 06C, Page 410, 1939
- ⁶ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 25 February 2018) entry for Woolley, Eveline Minnie, Registration district: Kings Norton, Volume 06C, Page 392; "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 25 February 2018), entry for Eveline M Jay, Ref: RG101/11971/022/14 Letter code: CGFI
- ⁷ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 25 February 2018) entry for Woolley, Beatrice, Registration district: St Olave Southwark, Volume 01D, Page 279
- ⁸ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 25 February 2018) entry for Woolley, Mabel, Registration district: St Olave Southwark, Volume 01D, Page 257
- ⁹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 25 February 2018) entry for Woolley, Florence, Registration district: St Olave Southwark, Volume 01D, Page 248; "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 21 February 2018), entry for Alfred E Woolley
- ¹⁰ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 Feb 2018), entry for Dorothy Woolley, Registration district: Edmonton, Inferred county: Middlesex, Volume: 3a, Page: 1409
- ¹¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 25 February 2018) entry for Woolley, Horace Percy, Registration district: Kings Norton, Volume 06C, Page 453; "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 25 February 2018), entry for Horace Woolley, Ref: RG101/11971/022/14, Letter code: CGFI
- ¹² "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 25 February 2018) entry for Woolley, Howard Eustace, Registration district: Kings Norton, Volume 06C, Page 446; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 February 2018), entry for Howard Eustace Woolley, Registration district: St Saviour Southwark, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 73
- ¹³ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 25 February 2018) entry for Woolley, Frederick Frank, Registration district: St Saviour London, Volume 01D, Page 121
- ¹⁴ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 25 February 2018) entry for Woolley, Albert Edward, Registration district: Camberwell, Volume 01D, Page 943
- ¹⁵ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 25 February 2018) entry for Woolley, Ernest Sidney, Registration district: Camberwell, Volume 01D, Page 977; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 February 2018), entry for Ernest Sidney Woolley, Registration district: St Saviour Southwark, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 149
- ¹⁶ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 25 February 2018) entry for Woolley, Sidney James, Registration district: St Olave Southwark, Volume 01D, Page 224
- ¹⁷ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 February 2018), entry for Alfred E Woolley, Sub-registration district: St Peter Walworth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 13, Piece: 2074, Folio: 117, Page: 7
- ¹⁸ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 February 2018), entry for William Woolley, Registration district: St Olave Southwark, Sub-registration district: Rotherhithe, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 32, Piece: 362, Folio: 115
- ¹⁹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2018), entry for Clara Woolley
- ²⁰ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 February 2018), entry for William Thomas Woolley

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- ²¹ 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 21 February 2018), entry for William Thomas Woolley
- ²² “British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 21 February 2018), entry for William T Woolley
- ²³ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca; accessed 23 February 2018), entry for Woolley or Woosy
- ²⁴ “King’s Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment),” *The Long, Long Trail* (<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/>; accessed 24 February 2018)
- ²⁵ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca; accessed 23 February 2018), entry for Woolley or Woosy
- ²⁶ “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=FIND&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca; accessed 23 February 2018), entry for Woolley or Woosy; accessed 7 September 2014)
- ²⁷ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca; accessed 23 February 2018), entry for Woolley or Woosy
- ²⁸ “Pernes British Military Cemetery,” *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>; accessed 13 January 2015)
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- ³¹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org; accessed 23 February 2018), entry for Woolley, William Thomas, Service No: 260025
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- ³³ “British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 21 February 2018), entry for William T Woolley
- ³⁴ “British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 21 February 2018), entry for Frederick Frank Woolley. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Frederick’s military service comes from this source.
- ³⁵ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org; accessed 24 February 2018), entry for Woolley, Frederick Frank, Service No: 7942
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ “British Army WWI Pension Records 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 21 February 2018), entry for Horace Woolley, Regimental number 7298. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Horace’s military service comes from this source.
- ³⁸ “1939 Register,” *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 25 February 2018), entry for Horace Woolley, Ref: RG101/11971/022/14, Letter code: CGFI
- ³⁹ “London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754–1931,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 21 February 2018), entry for Eveline Minnie Woolley
- ⁴⁰ “London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754–1931,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 21 February 2018), entry for Cecilia [*sic*] Clair Woolley
- ⁴¹ *Find A Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com> : accessed 06 March 2018), memorial page for Private James George Jay (unknown–30 Dec 1915), Find A Grave Memorial no. [15348121](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/15348121), citing Loos

Memorial, Loos-en-Gohelle, Departement du Pas-de-Calais, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France ; Maintained by IWPP Custodial Account (contributor [48586138](#))

⁴² "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 25 February 2018), entry for Cecilia [*sic*] E Jay, Ref: RG101/11971/022/14, Letter code: —

⁴³ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 25 February 2018), entry for Eveline M Jay, Ref: RG101/0395H/003/23, Letter code: CGFI

⁴⁴ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 21 February 2018), entry for Alfred E Woolley