

Serjeant Percy Hills Whittaker[©]
Regimental number: 12546
20th Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corp

born: 1887 – died: 20 April 1918

Percy Hills Whittaker was born in the winter of 1887 at Bridlington, Yorkshire, England.¹ He was the youngest of three children born to Henry Leadley Whittaker, born about 1851 in Bridlington,² and Elizabeth Hills, born about 1849 in March, Cambridgeshire.³ Percy's sisters were Ethel, born 2 January 1881 in Bridlington,⁴ and Eva, born in the spring of 1884, also in Bridlington.⁵ Henry and Elizabeth had married at Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire, in the fall of 1879.⁶

In 1881, the young family, which then only included infant daughter Ethel, was living in Bridlington at 99 St. John Street. Henry was a bricklayer.⁷ Ten years later, the family was still at the same address in Bridlington, where Henry was a bricklayer and plasterer.⁸ By 1901, the family was still together at the same address in Bridlington. Henry was a bricklayer, Ethel, 20, was a dressmaker, Eva, 17, was a milliner, and Percy, 13, was a scholar.⁹ It is likely that the sisters worked for their uncle George, brother of Henry, who was a partner of Harrison & Whittaker, fancy drapers.¹⁰

In 1911 the family was still all together but living at 87 John Street in Bridlington. Henry, at the age of 60, was still a bricklayer, Ethel was a dressmaker, Eva was a shop assistant and Percy, then 24 years old, was a joiner.¹¹ A joiner is an artisan who builds things by joining pieces of wood,

generally lighter or more ornamental than the work of a carpenter. A joiner could make items such as doors, windows, stairs, or furniture.¹² In the fall of 1911, Ethel married George E. Jude in Bridlington.¹³



Photo of Percy's grave marker at Pernes British Cemetery

Source: *Find a Grave* (www.findagrave.com)

On 27 November 1915, Percy enlisted with the 21st King's Royal Rifle Corps at Helmsley. He was just shy of his 30th birthday and listed his occupation as joiner. This service battalion was formed in the fall of 1915 from volunteers from the farming communities of Yorkshire, Northumberland and Durham. Percy, with the battalion, landed in France on 4 May 1916. In November 1917 the battalion was moved to Italy, returning to France in early March 1918. On 16 March 1918, the battalion was disbanded,¹⁴ and Percy was transferred to the 20th King's Royal Rifle Corps.¹⁵ No war diaries for the 20th were found that included the spring of 1918.

Percy was promoted several times: on 2 October 1916 to lance corporal, on 1 May 1917 to acting corporal, and on 20 October 1917 to acting serjeant.¹⁶ Percy appears to have endured his war service unscathed until 20 April 1918, when he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with shrapnel wounds to his left arm and side. Sadly,

he died the same day and was buried the next day at Pernes British Cemetery in Plot 1, Row C, Grave 6.¹⁷

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.¹⁸

Percy was posthumously awarded both the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre). Both medals were provided to his mother.¹⁹

In 1919 Percy's father Henry died at the age of 69 in Bridlington.²⁰ His mother passed away at the age of 85 in the winter of 1934, also in Bridlington.²¹ His sister Ethel had at least one child, Edwin P. Jude, on 26 April 1921.²² His sister Eva possibly died unmarried at the age of 63 in the fall of 1947 in Buckrose, Yorkshire.²³

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¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Percy Hills L Whittaker, Registration district: Bridlington, Inferred county: Yorkshire East Riding, Volume: 9d, Page: 334

² "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Henry Whittaker, Registration district: Bridlington, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 5, Piece: 4798, Folio: 79, Page: 18

³ "1851 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Elizabeth Hills, Registration district: North Witchford, Sub-registration district: Chatteris, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 2d, Household schedule number: 112, Piece: 1765, Folio: 654, Page: 31

⁴ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Ethel Jude, Registration district : 185-1; Enumeration District : TCCJ ; Schedule Number : 21 ; Sub Schedule Number : 2

⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Eva Leadley Whittaker, Registration district: Bridlington, Inferred county: Yorkshire East Riding, Volume: 9d, Page: 361

⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Henry Leadley Whittaker, Registration district: Whittlesey, Inferred county: Cambridgeshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 1276

⁷ See Endnote 2

⁸ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Henry L Whittaker, Registration district: Bridlington, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 6, Piece: 3959, Folio: 80

⁹ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Percy Whittaker, Registration district: Bridlington, Sub-registration district: Bridlington, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 02, Piece: 4524, Folio: 22, Page: 36, Household schedule number: 257

¹⁰ "UK, City and County Directories, 1766–1946," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Henry Leadley Whittaker, Publication Year: 1913

¹¹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Henry Leadley Whittaker, Registration district: Bridlington, Registration district number: 526, Sub-registration district: Bridlington, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 3, Piece: 28892

¹² "Joiner," Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joiner>: accessed 10 July 2018)

¹³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Ethel L Whittaker, Registration district: Bridlington, Inferred county: Yorkshire East Riding, Volume: 9d, Page: 777

¹⁴ "King's Royal Rifle Corps," *The Long, Long Trail* (<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/regiments-and-corps/the-british-infantry-regiments-of-1914-1918/kings-royal-rifle-corps/>: accessed 10 July 2018) entry for 21st (Service) Battalion (Yeoman Rifles)

¹⁵ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Percy Hills Whittaker

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Whittaker, P. H.; *Find a Grave* (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/123048707/percy-hills-whittaker>: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Serjeant Percy Hills Whittaker

¹⁸ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Pernes British Cemetery

¹⁹ See Endnote 15

²⁰ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Henry L Whittaker, Registration district: Bridlington, Inferred county: Yorkshire

²¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Elizabeth A Whittaker, Registration district: Bridlington, Inferred county: Yorkshire East Riding, Volume: 9d, Page: 447

²² See Endnote 4

²³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2018), entry for Eva L Whittaker, Registration district: Buckrose, Inferred county: Yorkshire East Riding, Volume: 2a, Page: 8