

## **Private John Henry Boam<sup>©</sup>**

**Regimental number: 53544<sup>1</sup>**

**21st Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own)**

**born: 1899–died: 23 April 1918**

Private John Henry Boam was just 19 when he died in the First World War. Fortunately for his family, his older brother survived the war, although he had been injured. Sadly, all of the surviving children suffered a form of disability.

John had been born in 1899 to Vincent Saxton Boam and Mary Porter. Vincent was born about 1867 in Tupton, Derbyshire, England, to John and Mary Boam.<sup>2</sup> Mary was born about 1870 in Newbold, Derbyshire, to George Porter and Lydia Elizabeth Haywood.<sup>3</sup>

Both Vincent and George worked in the coal mines in Chesterfield, Derbyshire. Sadly, George passed away before 1881, leaving Lydia and Mary, so Lydia remained in the area, becoming an office cleaner at the mine.<sup>4</sup>

Vincent and Mary were married in Chesterfield on 26 August 1895<sup>5</sup> and had five children, all born in Chesterfield:

- Walter, whose birth was registered in the third quarter of 1895.<sup>6</sup> He too saw military service in the war, enlisting with the Royal Garrison Artillery. He was discharged on 12 February 1919, identified as having a disability.<sup>7</sup> In October 1919 he married Beatrice Bond,<sup>8</sup> but he died in 1933 in Chesterfield.<sup>9</sup>
- Edward, who was born 14 May 1899 and baptized on 9 August 1898; he died before the end of the year.<sup>10</sup>
- John Henry, whose birth was registered in the third quarter of 1899.<sup>11</sup>
- Vincent Saxton, named after his father; both his birth and death were registered in the second quarter of 1902.<sup>12</sup>
- Elsie, the only daughter, who was born 5 September 1910. In 1939, Elsie was residing at Whittington Hall, in the National Institution for Persons Requiring Care and Control in Chesterfield. She was unable to work as she was considered an incapacitated patient.<sup>13</sup> Elsie's death was registered during the first quarter of 1989 in Chesterfield.<sup>14</sup>

In 1901 the family was living at 71 Millions Head Yard, Sallergate, Chesterfield and Lydia, Mary's mother, was living next door, working as a charwoman. Vincent was a coal miner and Mary was home with young Walter and John.<sup>15</sup>

In 1911 the family was living at Scofield Yards, Chesterfield. Vincent was still a coal miner, and son Walter, aged 16, appears to have also been working in the coal mine. The census noted that Walter was an imbecile. It is not certain what the term "imbecile" meant in those days, and it was likely not applied with any consistency and/or knowledge by householders responding to the census. Whatever it meant in Walter's case, it did not prevent him from later serving with the Royal Garrison Artillery during the war.<sup>16</sup>

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,<sup>17</sup> and it appears that John's records were not saved. As a result, certain specifics of John's military experience were not obtainable.

We do know that John enlisted at Chesterfield and was placed with the 21st Battalion of the Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire) Regiment.<sup>18</sup> The 21st (Service) Battalion (Wool Textile Pioneers) worked in conjunction with the engineers along the Front. They were men experienced with picks and shovels (i.e. miners like John, road men, etc.) and some who had skilled trades (smiths, carpenters, joiners, bricklayers, masons, tinsmiths, engine drivers and fitters.)<sup>19</sup>

Because John received a war gratuity of £3,<sup>20</sup> he had enlisted less than one year prior to his death. The war gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those WWI servicemen who had served in the home service for a period of at least six months, or for any length of time if the man had served overseas.<sup>21</sup>

On 22 April 1918 John was admitted to the No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with gunshot wounds to his right hip and abdomen.<sup>22</sup> A casualty clearing station (CCS) is a military medical facility behind the front lines that is used to treat wounded soldiers. A CCS would usually be located just beyond the range of enemy artillery and often near transportation facilities (e.g., a railway). The CCS receives battlefield casualties from regimental aid posts located in the combat zone.



**Gravestone of Private J. H. Boam**  
Source: *Find a Grave*

Casualties that could not be adequately treated in the CCS were stabilized there before being transported to a field hospital or military hospital.<sup>23</sup>

Sadly, the following day John passed away and was buried at Pernes British Cemetery, in Plot 1, Row D, Grave 19.<sup>24, 25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup>

John 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).<sup>27</sup>

Vincent and Mary passed away a couple of years from each other. Vincent's death was recorded in the first quarter of 1939 in Chesterfield,<sup>28</sup> and Mary's was recorded in the second quarter of 1941 in Ilkeston, Derbyshire.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The chaplain incorrectly recorded John's initials and regimental number in the No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station journal.

<sup>2</sup> "1871 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Vincent S Bram [sic], Registration district: Chesterfield, Sub-registration district: Chesterfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 3, Household schedule number: 215, Piece: 3609, Folio: 61, Page: 42

<sup>3</sup> "1871 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Mary Porter, Registration district: Chesterfield, Sub-registration district: Chesterfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 12, Household schedule number: 11, Piece: 3610, Folio: 104, Page: 3

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- <sup>4</sup> "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca); accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Mary Porter, Registration district: Chesterfield, Sub-registration district: Chesterfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 8, Piece: 3431, Folio: 55, Page: 5
- <sup>5</sup> "Derbyshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1932," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca); accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Mary Porter
- <sup>6</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca); accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Walter Boam, Registration district: Chesterfield, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 7b, Page 739
- <sup>7</sup> "UK, WWI Pension Ledgers and Index Cards, 1914–1923," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca); accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Walter Boam, Regimental number: 72368, Form title: Pension Record Ledger
- <sup>8</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca); accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Walter Boam, Registration district: Chesterfield, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 2039
- <sup>9</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca); accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Walter Boam, Registration district: Chesterfield, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 660
- <sup>10</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 27 April 2021) entry for Boam, Edward, Registration district: Chesterfield, Volume: 07B, Pages: 742 and 434
- <sup>11</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 27 April 2021) entry for Boam, John Henry, Registration district: Chesterfield, Volume: 07B, Page: 771
- <sup>12</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 27 April 2021) entry for Boam, Vincent Saxton, Registration district: Chesterfield, Volume: 07B, Pages: 782 and 393
- <sup>13</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca); accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Elsie Boam, Borough: Chesterfield; Enumeration District: RBIP, Registration District: 438-2
- <sup>14</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca); accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Elsie Boam, Registration district: Chesterfield, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 6, Page 501
- <sup>15</sup> "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca); accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Vincent S Boam, Registration district: Chesterfield, Sub-registration district: Chesterfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 12, Piece: 3248, Folio: 13, Page: 12, Household schedule number: 71
- <sup>16</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca); accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Vincent Saxton Boam, Registration district: Chesterfield, Registration district number: 438, Sub-registration district: Chesterfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 21089
- <sup>17</sup> "How to research a soldier," *The Long, Long Trail* (<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/how-to-research-a-soldier/>; accessed 26 April 2021)
- <sup>18</sup> "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca); accessed 27 April 2021), entry for John Henry Boam
- <sup>19</sup> "The Labour Corps of 1917-1918," *The Long, Long Trail* (<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/regiments-and-corps/the-labour-corps-of-1917-1918/>; accessed 3 May 2021)
- <sup>20</sup> "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); accessed 27 April 2021), entry for John Henry Boam
- <sup>21</sup> "What was the war gratuity?" *The war gratuities of WWI* (<https://wargratiuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/what-was-the-war-gratuity/>; accessed 26 April 2021)
- <sup>22</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca); accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Boam, J. A.
- <sup>23</sup> "Casualty Clearing Station," *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualty\\_Clearing\\_Station](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualty_Clearing_Station); accessed 26 April 2021)
- <sup>24</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa*, entry for Boam, J. A.

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<sup>25</sup> *Find a Grave* (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/123046536/j-h-boam/photo>: accessed 28 April 2021), entry for Private J. J. Boam

<sup>26</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 26 April 2021), entry for Pernes British Cemetery

<sup>27</sup> "UK, British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 27 April 2021), entry for John H Boam

<sup>28</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Vincent S Boam, Registration district: Chesterfield, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 948

<sup>29</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 27 April 2021), entry for Mary Boam, Registration district: Ilkeston, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 952