

Lance Corporal Robert Langley

Regimental Number: 1527

1st Battalion Rifle Brigade

born: 1889 - died: 18 May 1918

Robert Langley, son of Ernest Albert and Emily Kate Langley, was born in early 1889 in Putney, Surrey and the family was living at 8 Victoria Road.¹ His older sister, Ethel, had been born four years earlier.² Their mother, Emily Kate, died in 1896 when the Robert was just 6 years old.³ His father, a police constable, had two young children to care for and remarried soon after. In 1897 he married Annie Lucock.⁴ In 1901, at the age of 12, Robert was living with his father and step-mother, as well as other members of his extended family – an uncle, William Langley, a house decorator/painter; a cousin, George Drew; and an uncle, George Lucock, a carman – at 16 Brathway Road, Wandsworth, London S.W.⁵ His father and step-mother subsequently had two more daughters – Evelyn Emily (born about 1903) and Kathleen Annie (born about 1907) – and a third child had died.⁶

By 1911, Robert was working for the Metropolitan Asylums Board at the Tooting Bec Asylum as an asylum attendant.⁷ His father was a pensioner from the police force and was working as a schoolkeeper at St Michael's Church Day Schools and still living at 16 Brathway Road.⁸ Ernest continued to live on Brathway Road until 1913 when he and Annie moved to 66 Merton Road, Wandsworth.⁹

Robert enlisted in the army in London on 2 September 1914 for three years. His enlistment attestation specified that if the war lasted less than three years he would be "discharged with all convenient speed."¹⁰ He enlisted as a Private and served in the 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own).¹¹ He left for France on 4 February 1915. He later transferred to the 10th Battalion and finally to the 1st Battalion. During this time he was also promoted to Lance Corporal.

The Rifle Brigade was first formed in 1800 as the "Experimental Corps of Riflemen," but was renamed The Rifle Brigade in 1816. The unit was the first to use green uniforms, as opposed to the traditional red, as standard issue.¹² The Rifle Brigade fielded 28 battalions during the First World War and, in 1918, took part in the second Battle of the Somme, Battle of Lys, German withdrawal at Hinges, The Battle of Drocourt-Queant and the Battles of the Hindenburg Line.¹³



Rifle Brigade Memorial, London
(<http://en.wikipedia.org>)

Robert married Violet May Gibbs in the last quarter of 1917, just months before he died.¹⁴ On 18 May 1918, he was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with a shrapnel wound to the head, left arm and legs and died the same day. He was 29 years old. He was a member of the Church of England and the chaplain presiding at his burial the next day in the Pernes British Military Cemetery (Grave 1, Plot 1, Row E) was J. K. Tibbits.

On 18 May, 199 soldiers were admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station.¹⁵ This brought the total number of patients to 376. In the whole month of May, there were 115 deaths at this CCCS – more than in any of the other three and a half months that the 1st CCCS was in Pernes.



R. Langley in Pernes British Military Cemetery
(Source: Author, July 2015)

The Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when the 1st and 4th Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.¹⁶

The chaplain notified his wife, who was then living at 2 Halford Ter., Granville Rd, Wandsworth, London, S.W. 18, of his death¹⁷ and she received the monies the army owed Robert after his death.¹⁸ She had become a widow just six months after becoming a bride. It appears that Violet remarried in 1923, but continued to live in Wandsworth.¹⁹

Robert was awarded the British Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914-15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).²⁰

Robert's father and step-mother continued to live at 66 Merton Road until his death in January 1932.²¹ It is not known when his step-mother, Annie, died.

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¹ "London, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 September 2014), entry for Robert Langley

² "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 September 2014), entry for Robert Longley, Registration district: Wandsworth, Sub-registration district: Wandsworth, ED, institution, or vessel: 9, Piece: 446, Folio: 61, Page Number: 15

³ "England & Wales deaths 1837-2007," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 4 September 2014), entry for Emily Kate Langley, District: Wandsworth, County: London, Volume: 1D, Page: 423

⁴ "Surrey, England, Marriages, 1754-1937," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 September 2014), entry for Ernest Albert Langley

⁵ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 September 2014), entry for Robert Langley, Registration district: Wandsworth, Sub-registration district: Wandsworth, ED, institution, or vessel: 11, Piece: 482, Folio: 72, Page Number: 24, Household schedule number: 153

⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 September 2014), entry for Ernest Albert Langley, Registration district: Wandsworth, Registration District Number: 26, Sub-registration district: Southfields, ED, institution, or vessel: 25, Piece: 2416

⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 September 2014), entry for Robert Langley, Registration district: Wandsworth, Registration District Number: 26, Sub-registration district: Streatham, ED, institution, or vessel: 84-91, Piece: 2369

⁸ "1911 England Census," entry for Ernest Albert Langley

⁹ "London, England, Electoral Registers, 1832-1965," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 September 2014), entry for Ernest Albert Langley

¹⁰ "British Army Service Records 1914-1920," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 3 September 2014), entry for Robert Langley

¹¹ "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 December 2014), entry for Robert Langley

¹² "Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own)"

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rifle_Brigade_\(Prince_Consort's_Own\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rifle_Brigade_(Prince_Consort's_Own)): accessed 3 September 2014)

¹³ "Forces War Records: Unit History: Rifle Brigade" (<http://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/units/297/rifle-brigade/>: accessed 3 September 2014)

¹⁴ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 3 September 2014), entry for Robert Langley, District: Wandsworth, County: London, Volume: 1D, Page: 1213

¹⁵ "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)

¹⁶ "Pernes British Military Cemetery" *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>; accessed 13 January 2015)

¹⁷ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2014), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 496

¹⁸ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 19 January 2015), entry for Robert Langley

¹⁹ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 3 September 2014), entry for Violet M. Langley, District: Wandsworth, County: London, Volume: 1D, Page: 1090

²⁰ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 26 November 2014), entry for Robert Langley

²¹ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 4 September 2014), entry for Ernest Albert Langley