

Lance Corporal Harold Pickford
Regimental number: 18158
7th Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment

born: 29 May 1894 - died: 30 April 1916

Lance Corporal Harold Pickford, the eldest son of Tom and Ada Pickford, was born on 29 May 1894 in Leeds and baptised in the parish church on 8 July of the same year.¹ Both his parents were born in Leeds in 1873. His father was born on 9 January, the son of Edward and Mary Pickford.² His wife, the former Ada McKay, daughter of George and Mary McKay, was born on 22 December.³ Tom and Ada were married in the parish church on 30 September 1893. Tom was a currier – the person who dresses, finishes and colours tanned leather.⁴ They subsequently had three children: Harold, Mabel (born on 30 April 1896)⁵ and Thomas Alfred (born in about 1901).⁶

When they were married and when Harold and Mabel were born, the family was living in Leeds. By 1901, the family had moved to Kettering in Northamptonshire.⁷ In 1911, they were living at 97 King Street in Kettering, where both Tom and Harold were leather dressers.⁸

It was in Kettering that Harold enlisted in the 7th (Service) Battalion of the Northamptonshire. The 7th Battalion landed in France in early September 1915⁹ and Harold joined the unit there on 25 November of the same year.¹⁰ He died just five months later, a month before his 22nd birthday.

In April 1916, his Battalion was stationed near Wulverghem in Belgium.¹¹ In the last days of the month there was bombardment of their position causing casualties. On 30 April, the enemy launched a gas attack, followed by heavy bombardment, causing more casualties. Perhaps Harold was wounded in one of these attacks. He died at the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station of wounds to his abdomen on 30 April.¹² Fifteen patients died the same day as Harold, many from gas poisoning.¹³ He lost two comrades from his battalion the same day: Lance Corporal Amos Sydney Lenton, and Private Alfred William Ludlow.

Harold was a member of the Church of England¹⁴ and was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot II, Row D, Grave 123).¹⁵ Bailleul is in France, close to the Belgian border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several Casualty Clearing Stations, including the 1st Canadian, were quartered there for considerable periods. The earliest Commonwealth burials at Bailleul were made in April 1915. An extension was built and burials continued until April 1918, and occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when graves were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.¹⁶

A letter was sent to his mother to notify her of his death¹⁷ and she received the monies owing to him by the army after his death.¹⁸

Harold was awarded the British War 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).¹⁹

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¹ "West Yorkshire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1910," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 26 August 2015), entry for Harold Pickford

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- ² "West Yorkshire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1910," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2015), entry for Tom Pickford
- ³ "West Yorkshire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1910," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2015), entry for Ada McKay
- ⁴ "Currier," *Wikipedia* (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Currier>; accessed 26 August 2015)
- ⁵ "West Yorkshire, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1910," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2015), entry for Mabel Pickford
- ⁶ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 August 2015), entry for Thomas Alfred Pickford, Registration district: Kettering, Inferred County: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 196
- ⁷ "1901 England Census," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2015), entry for Bruno Whittle, Registration district: Kettering, Sub-registration district: Kettering, ED, institution, or vessel: 30, Piece: 1449, Folio: 135, Page Number: 12, Household schedule number: 54
- ⁸ "1911 England Census," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 August 2015), entry for Harold Rockford, Registration district: Kettering, Registration District Number: 167, Sub-registration district: Kettering, ED, institution, or vessel: 17, Household schedule number: 192, Piece: 8585
- ⁹ "The Northamptonshire Regiment," The Long, Long Trail (<http://www.1914-1918.net/northants.htm>; accessed 26 August 2015)
- ¹⁰ UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 August 2015), entry for Harold Pickford
- ¹¹ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2015), Regiment or Unit: Northamptonshire Regiment, Sub Unit: 7th Battalion, Division: 24th Division, Diary Entry Start Date: 1915, Diary Dates: 1915 Aug - 1919 Jun, Piece Description: Piece 2218/2: 7 Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment (1915 Aug - 1919 Jun), Piece Number: 2218
- ¹² "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 71
- 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=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 17 June 2015)
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," (www.cwgc.org; accessed 17 August 2015), entry for Pickford, Harold, Service No: 18158
- ¹⁶ "Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000047/Bailleul%20Communal%20Cemetery,%20Nord>; accessed 5 August 2015)
- ¹⁷ Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 71
- ¹⁸ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 26 August 2015), entry for Harold Pickford
- ¹⁹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 August 2015), entry for Harold Pickford