

Corporal Ernest Edmund Holt[©]

Regimental number: 42255

2nd Battalion, Suffolk Regiment

born: 1894–died: 9 May 1918

Corporal Ernest Edmund Holt was born in 1894 in Bury, Lancashire,¹ the eldest child of Charles Holt and the former Jane Ratcliffe.² Charles (born on 23 March 1871)³ and Jane (born on 22 January 1870)⁴ had married on 23 December 1893 in All Saint's Church in the parish of Elton, just outside Bury.⁵ They and their three children were all born in Bury—Ernest's brother, Sydney, was born on 11 June 1896⁶ and his sister, Carrie, was born on 15 October 1900.⁷

With the industrial revolution in the mid-18th century, textile production became a key industry in Bury and, by the early 19th century, cotton production was the key textile.⁸ Ernest's whole family worked in the industry. His father was a cotton spinner⁹ and, by 1911, his sons had joined him in the industry—both Ernest and Sydney were piecers working on cotton mules¹⁰—a young person's job. "The youngest children in the textile factories were usually employed as scavengers and piecers. Piecers had to lean over the spinning-machine to repair the broken threads."¹¹

In 1901, the family was living at 90 Spring Street in Bury¹² but, by 1911, had moved out of Bury to the community of Middleton Junction (about 7 miles away) and were living at 1090 Middleton Road West.¹³

Three years later, Ernest married Eveline Lawton in the parish church of St Matthew in Chadderton, Lancashire. They married on 11 July 1914, with Ernest's brother and sister as witnesses. Both he and his wife were working in the cotton mills.¹⁴ They do not appear to have had any children.

About five months after his marriage, Ernest enlisted in the Suffolk Regiment of the British Expeditionary Force in Oldham, Lancashire,¹⁵ enlisting in about December 1914.¹⁶ Before joining the Suffolk Regiment, Ernest had served with the 24th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment (regimental number: 14380) and the 5th Battalion of the East Lancashire Regiment (regimental number: 39712).¹⁷

Ernest survived for about three and half years on the front. He joined the Western Front in France on 8 November 1915. Although it is not certain which regiment he was with when he went overseas, the 24th Manchester Regiment went to France on the same day,¹⁸ so it is likely he was with that battalion at the time. He probably became an acting sergeant when he was with the East Lancashire Regiment,¹⁹ but he was a corporal with the 2nd Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment when he died.

Ernest was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with shrapnel wounds to his thighs on 9 May 1918. He died the same day and was buried the next day in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row B, Grave 24) with the Canadian chaplain J. K. Tibbits presiding.

Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCSs came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.²⁰ Ernest was one of 331 injured soldiers admitted to No 1. CCCS on 9 May 1918 and one of 115 soldiers to die at the station that month. He was admitted the same day that Chaplain J. K. Tibbits arrived at the station from the 10th Stationary Hospital.²¹

Ernest's wife, who was living at 331 Grimshaw Lane, Middleton Junction in Manchester, received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death, and she had the following inscription carved on his gravestone in Pernes:

IN THE MIDST OF LIFE
WE ARE IN DEATH²²

Ernest was awarded posthumously 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).²³

It is not known what became of Ernest's wife or his brother Sydney, but his sister Carrie married Ernest Johnson (born on 3 October 1892)²⁴ on 23 October 1923 in the parish church in Holy Trinity, Failsworth, in Lancashire. Both Carrie and her husband were working in the cotton industry—Ernest as mule overlooker and Carrie as a roller coverer²⁵ (making tubes of leather to cover the rollers used for making thread).²⁶ In 1939, Carrie and Ernest were living at 8 Larne Avenue in Stretford, Lancashire, with one of their children, a daughter, Edna.

In 1939, Ernest's parents were living at 7 Crossford Street in Stretford. His father had retired from the cotton industry.²⁷

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¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; 21 March 2019), entry for Holt, Ernest Edmund, Registration district: Bury and Lancaster, Volume 08C, Page 631

² "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 17 March 2019), entry for Ernest Edward [sic] Holt, Registration district: Oldham, Registration district number: 469, Sub-registration district: Chadderton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 8, Piece: 24539

³ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 18 March 2019), entry for Charles Holt, Schedule number: 23, Sub-schedule Number: 1, Enumeration district: NXDN, Registration district: 463/1

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Manchester, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1930," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 18 March 2019), entry for Charles Holt, Reference number: GB127.L171/1/2/5

⁶ "Manchester, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 21 March 2019), entry for Sydney Holt

⁷ "Manchester, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 21 March 2019), entry for Carrie Holt

⁸ "Bury, Greater Manchester," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bury_Greater_Manchester; accessed 19 March 2019)

⁹ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 17 March 2019), entry for Ernest Holt, Registration district: Bury, Sub-registration district: South Bury, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 05, Piece: 3645, Folio: 105, Page: 3, Household schedule number: 22

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¹¹ "Piecers in the Textile Industry," *Spartacus Educational* (<https://spartacus-educational.com/IRpiecers.htm>; accessed 19 March 2019)

¹² "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 17 March 2019), entry for Ernest Holt

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- ¹³ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 March 2019), entry for Ernest Edward [sic] Holt
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- ¹⁵ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 March 2019), entry for Ernest Edmund Holt
- ¹⁶ 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 19 March 2019), entry for Ernest Edmund Holt
- ¹⁷ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Ernest E Holt
- ¹⁸ "The Twenty fourth (Service) Battalion," *The Manchester Regiment 1758–1958* (<https://www.themanchesters.org/24th%20batt.htm>: accessed 21 March 2019)
- ¹⁹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Ernest E Holt
- ²⁰ "Pernes British Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 13 January 2015)
- ²¹ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/lac-bac/results/images?module=images&SortSpec=score+desc&Language=eng&ShowForm=hide&SearchIn_1=mikanNumber&SearchInText_1=2005082&Operator_1=AND&SearchIn_2=&SearchInText_2=&Operator_2=AND&SearchIn_3=&SearchInText_3=&Level=&MaterialDateOperator=after&MaterialDate=&DigitalImages=1&Source=&ResultCount=10: accessed 28 March 2018)
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- ²³ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Ernest E Holt
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- ²⁷ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 March 2019), entry for Charles Holt