

Sergeant John Robert Bolding

Regimental Number: 147036
“A” Special Company, Royal Engineers

born: 1890 - died: 19 May 1918

John Robert Bolding, born in the first half of 1890, was the eldest of eight children born to George William and Charlotte Eliza Bolding.¹ Two children died in childhood and the six surviving children included five sons and one daughter: George William (born 1892), Albert Edward (born 1896), Charles (born 1899), Arthur Richard (born 1902) and Charlotte Elizabeth (born 1905). John was baptised in St Trinity Church, East Finchley on 6 July 1890,² where his siblings were also baptised.

The family had lived in East Finchley, London for several generations. His father had done a number of jobs in his career: a labourer and caretaker,³ working for a church as a grave digger and an agricultural labourer.⁴

In 1907, when he was 17, John signed attestation papers to join the militia for six years. At the time, he was a carman, living at 2 Prospects Cottages, He joined the 5th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers.⁵

By 1911, John was a barman, working in a public house.⁶ He enlisted in London for service in World War I and initially served as a Private with the 9th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers (Regimental number 1079).⁷ Later he served as a Sergeant in “G” Special Company of the Royal Engineers (Regimental number 147036).⁸ The Special Companies were created during World War I to develop Britain’s response to German gas attacks.⁹



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

John joined the theatre of war in France on 1 June 1915. Three years later, he was injured and admitted on 29 April 1918 to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with gun shot wounds to the abdomen. He survived for a relatively long time at the Station, only succumbing to his wounds on 19 May. He was buried the following day in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 1, Row F, Grave 5) under the chaplaincy of J. K. Tibbits.¹⁰

On 29 April, 174 soldiers were admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, bringing the total number of patients to 388.¹¹ John was among the 115 soldiers who died at this CCCS in May – more than in any of the other three and a half months that the 1st CCCS was in Pernes. 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.¹²

John had married Ada Roberts on 24 August 1911 in her home parish in Willesden.¹³ They had three daughters over the next four years: Hilda Charlotte (born 1912),¹⁴ Elsie Rhoda, (born 1913, but sadly died at the age of 6 months)¹⁵ and Irene May (born 1915).¹⁶ Then in 1918, they had a son, John H., born within days or months of

his father's death.¹⁷ It is not known whether John ever knew that he had a son. His wife, Ada, who was living at 16 Prospect Place, Market Place, East Finchley, was informed of his death¹⁸ and received the monies the army owed John after his death.¹⁹ However, tragedy struck the Bolding family again only a few months later. John and Ada's only son, John, died in the first few months of 1919.²⁰

John 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).²¹

John's wife had the following inscription included on his gravestone:

DEAR JOHN WE MISS YOU
BUT GOD WHO KNOWS BEST
HAS CALLED YOU TO REST²²

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¹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2014), entry for John Robert Bolding, Registration district: Barnet, Registration District Number: 131, Sub-registration district: Finchley, ED, institution, or vessel: 19, Household schedule number: 325, Piece: 7177

² "London, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 November 2014), entry for John Robert Bolding, Baptism, Holy Trinity, Finchley, Barnet, Parish Registers

³ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 November 2014), entry for John R. Bolding, Registration district: Barnet, Sub-registration District: Finchley, ED, institution, or vessel: 5, Piece: 1056, Folio: 8, Page Number: 10

⁴ "1911 England Census," entry for John Robert Bolding

⁵ "British Army Service Records 1760-1915," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 25 November 2014), entry for John Robert Bolding, Series: militia service records 1806-1915, Box: 128, Box Record Number: 188

⁶ "1911 England Census," entry for John Robert Bolding

⁷ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2014), entry for John Robert Bolding

⁸ "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 501

⁹ "The Special Companies RE," *The Long, Long Trail* (<http://www.1914-1918.net/specialcoyre.htm>: accessed 26 November 2014) <http://www.1914-1918.net/specialcoyre.htm>

¹⁰ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 501

¹¹ "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=FIND&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 15 December 2014)

¹² "Pernes British Military Cemetery" *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 13 January 2015)

¹³ "London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754-1921" *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 November 2014), entry for John Robert Bolding, Parish: St Mary, Willesden, Borough: Brent

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- ¹⁴ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 November 2017) entry for Bolding, Hilda Charlotte, Registration district: Barnet, Volume: 3A, Page: 836
- ¹⁵ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 November 2017) entry for Bolding, Elsie Rhoda, Registration district: Barnet, Volume: 3A, Page: 834; "London, England, Deaths and Burials, 1813–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 October 2017), entry for Elsie Rhoda Bolding, Register type: Parish register
- ¹⁶ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 November 2017) entry for Bolding, Irene May, Registration district: Barnet, Volume: 3A, Page: 834
- ¹⁷ "England & Wales births 1837-2006", Findmypast (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2014), entry for John H. Bolding, District: Barnet, County: Middlesex, Volume: 3A, Page: 612
- ¹⁸ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 501," Record number 501
- ¹⁹ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 January 2015), entry for John Robert Bolding
- ²⁰ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2014), entry for John H. Bolding, Registration district: Barnet, County: Middlesex, Volume: 3a, Page: 586
- ²¹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 November 2014), entry for John R. Bolding
- ²² *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 4 November 2017), entry for Bolding, John Robert, Service No: 147036