

**Private Reginald Burrows ©**  
**Regimental number: 48011**  
**1st Battalion, South Wales Borderers**

**born: 6 December 1898 – died: 22 April 1918**

Private Reginald Burrows<sup>1,2</sup> was only 19 when he was killed in 1918 after serving for just over one year with the South Wales Borderers. He was the fourth child lost by then to his parents, John Crossley Burrows and Violetta Mary Thompson.

John Crossley Burrows had been baptized 19 October 1862 at Plemonstall, Cheshire, England, the son of Edward and Grace Burrows.<sup>3</sup> Various later censuses identify John's occupation as railway engine fireman or driver. Violetta Mary Thompson had been born in the summer of 1866 in Nantwich, Cheshire, to Thomas and Mary Thompson.<sup>4</sup> John and Violetta married in the fall of 1884 in Nantwich<sup>5</sup> and had 11 children.

Edward was their first child, born in the spring of 1885. In the 1891 Census, Edward was living with his widowed grandmother, Mary Thompson, and two uncles in Coppenhall Monks, Cheshire.<sup>6</sup> Sadly, Edward died when he was 19 and was buried on 24 May 1904 at Elton, Lancashire.<sup>7</sup>

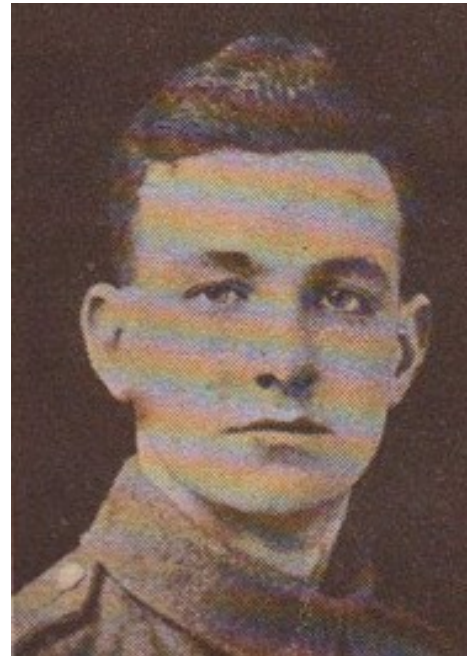
Three daughters followed Edward. Fanny was born in the spring of 1886 in Nantwich.<sup>8</sup> She married Jesse Warburton on 28 September 1907 in Elton Parish, Lancashire.<sup>9</sup> Alice was born about 1888 in Crewe, Cheshire. She married Thomas Boardman on 5 December 1908 in Tottington, Lancashire.<sup>10</sup> The third daughter, Violet Mary, was born about 1890 in Crewe. She married John Samuel Barlow on 30 May 1914 at Elton, Lancashire.<sup>11</sup>

In 1891, the family, except for Edward, were living at 38 Railway Street in Crewe and John was noted as a railway engine fireman.<sup>12</sup>

John Thomas, the next son of John and Violetta, was born 18 October 1892 at Nantwich.<sup>13</sup> It appears that John had an adventurous spirit and in 1910 at the age of 17 emigrated to Canada.<sup>14</sup> He returned to England in May 1913,<sup>15</sup> got married on 13 July 1913 to Ellen Louisa Gowing in Elton, Lancashire,<sup>16</sup> and then returned with his wife to Canada in August 1913.<sup>17</sup> They set up home in Windsor, Ontario. John Thomas did not participate in the Great War.

Son William was born in the winter of 1894 in Nantwich.<sup>18</sup> In 1918 he married Alice Livsey.<sup>19</sup> He had not participated in the war. During the first quarter of 1896 another son, Frank, was born but he died that fall.<sup>20</sup>

The eighth child of John and Violetta was James Taylor, who was born on 7 April 1897 in Crewe. James enlisted with the 16th Training Reserve Brigade on 31 July 1917 at Preston when he was 20. He was rather short at 5' 3" but well developed and muscular, a carter by trade, single and living in Bury. Apparently, he had been born with rickets and although he underwent an operation to correct



**Reginald Burrows**

Source: *Lives of the First World War*

his knock knees, he had had little improvement. In addition, he had a heart murmur and a few rickety nodules in his ribs, so he was discharged as being not physically fit for service.<sup>21</sup>

In 1927 James travelled to Canada to visit his brother John but did not stay.<sup>22</sup> In 1930 he married Phoebe Allen in Bury,<sup>23</sup> but she died in 1933.<sup>24</sup> In the summer of 1936 he married Florrie Nutter in Bury.<sup>25</sup> They purportedly moved in 1947 to Isle of Man, where Florrie died in 1952. After the death of his brother William in 1956,<sup>26</sup> James married William's widow, Alice Livsey, purportedly in February 1964 on the Isle of Man. She died in 1977,<sup>27</sup> and James died in 1983 in Wales.<sup>28</sup>

Reginald was John and Violetta's ninth child, born 6 December 1898 in Manchester, Lancashire.<sup>29</sup> The last daughter of John and Violetta, Grace, was born about 1900 in Bury, but she died in 1905 at the age of five.<sup>30</sup>

In 1901 the family was living at 30 Fenton Street, Elton, Bury. John was identified as a steam crane driver; Edward, then 16, was a book binder assistant and Fanny, then 15, was a calico weaver. The other children were either in school or at home.<sup>31</sup>

The final child of John and Violetta, Harry, was born 5 February 1902 in Elton.<sup>32</sup> In 1922, he too emigrated to Canada,<sup>33</sup> settling in Windsor near his brother John. He married Jane Jones on 29 April 1924 in Elton, Lancashire,<sup>34</sup> but probably shortly thereafter returned to Canada.

Sadly, John Sr. died at the age of 40. He was buried on 22 July 1903 at Elton,<sup>35</sup> leaving Violetta with ten children between the ages of 18 and 1. She was to bury her son Edward in 1904 and her daughter Grace in 1905. Perhaps to assist her in raising the children and seeking comfort, Violetta remarried in the fall of 1908 to Thomas Henry Thomas, a stationary engineer in a cotton mill. In the 1911 Census the combined families were then living at 79 Bolton Road in Bury: Thomas and Violetta with Thomas's daughter, Mary Ann, 17, and Violetta's children, Violet Mary, William, James Taylor, Reginald and Harry.<sup>36</sup> In September 1920, Violetta died at the age of 54 and was buried at Elton, Bury. Thomas Henry Thomas's death could not be confirmed.

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When the war broke out in 1914, Reginald was about 16 years old. His brothers had not shown an inclination to join the war effort, except for James who was deemed unfit to serve. However, shortly after Reginald turned 18, in March 1917, he enlisted at Bury with the South Wales Borderers. 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>37</sup> and it appears that Reginald's records were not saved. As a result, certain specifics of Reginald's military experience were not obtainable.

However, the war diary for the 1st Battalion, 1st Division, South Wales Borderers, for April 1918 gives a brief view of what Reginald was faced with during the last month of his life. Early in April, his battalion returned to the Front. On 8 April the battalion entrained at Peselhoek and after five rather uncomfortable hours in the train arrived at Fouquereil. From there they marched to Beuvry, where they were billeted in comfort. The men were roused from their sleep by "crumps" falling in the village. News arrived that the Germans had attacked from La Bassée Canal to Armentieres and had gained a footing in their line. The battalion was told to stand to and wait for orders.

By 11 April, the battalion was ordered to move to the Canal line, with two companies holding the line of the La Bassée Canal and two companies in support. Action over the next week was sporadic until the 18th, when their positions were heavily bombarded commencing at 4 a.m. Gas shells were

frequently fired. Shelling attacked both the front and rear lines. Around 9 a.m. hostile infantry attacks commenced. One section passed into the enemy's hands with the loss of many lives, a Vickers and three Lewis guns also being destroyed by shell fire. Other skirmishes were repulsed, but fighting was intense. A number of Germans were able to get close to the brigade via an old trench, but they were dealt with at close range and the attack collapsed. At that point in the attack, it was estimated that about 25% of the attacking force "were rendered casualties." Many Germans were observed about 10 a.m. wandering aimlessly about one sector, appearing to have lost their direction.

At 11 a.m. the Germans were observed amassing for an attack in the orchard, but that attack was repulsed without reaching the battalion's line. Early that afternoon almost 20 prisoners were taken. During the afternoon, observers saw large parties of Germans walking away in disorder. The battalion was able to identify the location of the Germans, so they were dealt with and driven away.

As a result of their actions, the battalion received several messages of congratulation expressing "admiration for the staunch and gallant defence put up" and "A very heavy attack pushed home by vastly superior numbers has been repulsed with heavy loss to the Germans. The troops have shown a splendid spirit and may feel proud of their achievement."

But their job was not complete, for on the 19th the battalion counterattacked to take back certain areas captured by the enemy the day before. Small parties were sent out to reconnoitre and identify



**Reginald's gravestone, Pernes British Cemetery**  
Source: *Find A Grave* ([www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com): accessed 27 January 2019), entry for Private Reginald Burrows

where the enemy was settled. At one section, within 15 minutes the troops rushed in, completely surprising the German garrison, who had no time to fire a round or put up an SOS signal. The company captured 19 German soldiers and three machine guns. However, during the battle to regain position, one officer was killed, several were injured, and 146 Other Ranks (Non-officers) were killed, wounded or missing. They also took six enemy machine guns, one officer and 35 Other Rank prisoners.

It is unknown what part Reginald played in these events, but on 22 April he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with gunshot wounds to his face and right thigh as well as a head fracture. 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. Casualties that cannot be adequately treated in the CCS are stabilized there before being transported to a field hospital or military hospital.<sup>38</sup>

Reginald died the day of his admission and was buried later that day at Pernes British Cemetery in Plot 1, Row D, Grave 17. A letter informing his family of his death was sent to his sister at 79 Bolton Road, Elton, Bury. The inscription on his gravestone reads:<sup>39</sup>

ETERNAL REST  
GIVE UNTO HIM O LORD  
FROM HIS EVER LOVING MOTHER

Reginald 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>40</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Lives of the First World War* (<https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org/lifestory/626268>: accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Private Reginald Burrows

<sup>2</sup> *Lives of the First World War* (<https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org/lifestory/626268>: accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Private Reginald Burrows

<sup>3</sup> "Cheshire, England, Select Bishop's Transcripts, 1576–1933," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for John Crawley Burrows, FHL Film number: 1751558

<sup>4</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Violetta Thompson, Registration district: Nantwich, Inferred County: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 268

<sup>5</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Violetta Thompson, Registration district: Nantwich, Inferred County: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 457

<sup>6</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Edward Burrow, Sub Registration district: Crew, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 13, Piece: 2850, Folio: 120

<sup>7</sup> "Manchester, England, Church of England Deaths and Burials, 1813–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Edward Burrows, Parish: Elton, All Saints

<sup>8</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Fanny Burrows, Registration district: Nantwich, Inferred County: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 333

<sup>9</sup> "Manchester, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1930," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Fanny Burrows, Parish: Elton

<sup>10</sup> "Manchester, England, Non-Conformist Marriages, 1758–1937," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Alice Burrows

<sup>11</sup> "Manchester, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1930," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Violet Mary Burrows, Parish: Elton

<sup>12</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for John C. Burrows, Sub-registration district: Crewe, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 2850, Folio: 44

<sup>13</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for John Thomas Burrows, Registration district: Nantwich, Inferred County: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 349

<sup>14</sup> "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Jno Thos Burrows, Arrival Port: Quebec, Canada, Vessel: Victoria

<sup>15</sup> "UK, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878–1960," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for John Burrows, Port of Arrival: Glasgow, Scotland, Ship Name: Grampian, Official Number 124220

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- <sup>16</sup> “Manchester, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1930,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for John Thomas Burrows, Parish: Elton
- <sup>17</sup> “Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for John Burrows, Arrival port: Quebec, Canada, Vessel: Empress of Britain
- <sup>18</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for William Burrows, Registration district: Nantwich, Inferred county: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 356
- <sup>19</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for William Burrows, Registration district: Bury, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8c, Page: 911
- <sup>20</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Frank Burrows, Registration district: Nantwich, Inferred county: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 281
- <sup>21</sup> “British Army WWI Pension Records 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for James Taylor Burrows
- <sup>22</sup> Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for James Burrows, Arrival Port: Saint John, New Brunswick, Vessel: Montroyal
- <sup>23</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for James Burrows, Registration district: Bury, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8c, Page: 1325
- <sup>24</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Phoebe Burrows, Registration district: Bury, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8c, Page: 539
- <sup>25</sup> “England & Wales, Marriage Index: 1916–2005,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Florrie Nutter, Registration district: Bury, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8c, Page: 679
- <sup>26</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for William Burrows, Registration district: Hailsham, Inferred county: Sussex, Volume: 5h, Page: 280
- <sup>27</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Alice Burrows, Registration district: Colwyn, Inferred county: Clwyd, Volume: 24, Page: 0112
- <sup>28</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for James Taylor Burrows, Registration district: Rhuddlan, Inferred county: Clwyd, Volume: 24, Page: 0710
- <sup>29</sup> “Manchester, England, Church of England Births and Baptisms, 1813–1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Reginald Burrows, Parish: All Saints, Elton
- <sup>30</sup> “Manchester, England, Church of England Deaths and Burials, 1813–1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Grace Burrows, Parish: Elton, All Saints
- <sup>31</sup> “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Grace Burrows, Registration district: Bury, Sub-registration district: Elton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 08, Piece: 3637, Folio: 36, Page: 10, Household schedule number: 55
- <sup>32</sup> “England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Harry Burrows, Registration district: Bury, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8c, Page: 563
- <sup>33</sup> “Canada, Ocean Arrivals (Form 30A), 1919–1924,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Harry Burrows, Port of Arrival: Quebec, Ship Name: Montrose
- <sup>34</sup> “Manchester, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1930,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Harry Burrows, Parish: Elton
- <sup>35</sup> “Manchester, England, Church of England Deaths and Burials, 1813–1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for John Crossley Burrows, Parish: Elton, All Saints

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<sup>36</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Violetta Mary Thomas, Registration district: Bury, Registration district number: 462, Sub-registration district: Elton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 1, Piece: 23459

<sup>37</sup> "How to research a soldier," *The Long, Long Trail, The British Army in the Great War of 1914–1918* (<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/how-to-research-a-soldier/>: accessed 30 May 2017)

<sup>38</sup> "Casualty Clearing Station," *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualty\\_Clearing\\_Station](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualty_Clearing_Station): accessed 4 February 2017)

<sup>39</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 27 January 2019), entry for Burrows, Reginald

<sup>40</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 25 January 2019), entry for Reginald Burrows