

Private John Buckley[©]
Regimental number: 99432
1st/7th Battalion, The King's (Liverpool Regiment)

born: 18 June 1899–died: 7 May 1918

Private John Buckley was born on 18 June 1899 and baptized on 29 September of the same year at St. Mary Magdalene church in Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire.¹ He was the son of Thomas and Elizabeth Buckley—both born in Sutton-in-Ashfield.² His father was born on 11 December 1876³ and his mother, the former Elizabeth Eleanor Clarke, the following year, on 14 September 1877.⁴ They probably also married in Sutton-in-Ashfield because the marriage was registered four miles away in Mansfield in 1898.⁵

Thomas and Elizabeth were living on York Street in Sutton-in-Ashfield with their first two sons in 1901, where Thomas was a coal miner (hewer⁶).⁷ Ten years later they had moved to 18 Chatsworth Street, where they would remain for at least thirty years. Thomas was now a coal miner (stallman⁸) and all four children were at home:⁹

- John,
- Francis (called Frank) (born in 1901),¹⁰
- Evan Charles (born on 14 February 1904)¹¹ and
- Annie (born on 13 October 1907).¹²

John turned 18 in June 1917 and was eligible to serve in the Great War. He enlisted sometime after May 1917,¹³ joining the 1st/7th Battalion of The King's (Liverpool) Regiment in Derby,¹⁴ 20 miles from his home.

The 1st/7th Battalion was one of the “Pals” battalions—initially made up primarily of men from the same geographic area.¹⁵ In 1915, all men in this battalion came from Bootle, Southport and the Merseyside area. In the early years of the war, about 16 men in the battalion were dying each month. However, by 1918 this had risen to about 29 men, and the ranks of the battalions were being depleted. Transfers and newly enlisted men—both conscripts and volunteers—from other places were being placed in the battalion to bolster its ranks so that, in 1918, only 45% were from the Bootle, Southport and Merseyside area. Although another 45% were from elsewhere in Lancashire, 10% of the soldiers came from outside the county. John was one of those from outside Lancashire who joined the battalion late in the war. In spite of the declining number of local men, the social cohesion and *esprit de corps* that was assumed to come from being a Pals battalion remained high.

John may have been with the battalion when it engaged in the Third Battle of Ypres in late July 1917. By the time the battalion was relieved on 4 August, it had participated in what was called its “finest hour.”¹⁶ The battalion, in fact the whole division of which it was part, again came in for high praise for its defensive tactics ahead of the German Spring Offensive in 1918. When the Germans attacked on 9 April, the 1st/7th Battalion had been in the trenches near Festubert since the end of March. Casualties of the German attack were high, but “the 7th Kings were doing heroic work . . . everybody was in it – RE’s [*sic*] [Royal Engineers], Pioneers, cooks, bottlewashers and all.”¹⁷ The battalion was relieved on 13 April, after two weeks in the trenches. The successes of the battalion and the division of which it was part demonstrated the importance of community links to

maintaining morale and combat effectiveness. "Community identity had been firmly re-established at Home and in 1/7th King's, despite the reduction in the numbers of local men."¹⁸

This was the context which John left when he was injured and admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 6 May 1918. He had received gunshot wounds to his right thigh, buttock and arms and suffered a compound fracture. He died the following day and was buried the same day in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row B, Grave No. 4) with the Canadian chaplain R. K. Lambert presiding.¹⁹ He was not yet 20 years old.

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 John was one of 52 soldiers admitted on 6 May and one of 115 soldiers to die at the station that month.²¹

John's next of kin was his mother, and she received a letter from the chaplain to notify her of her son's death. His father received the monies owing to John from the army upon his death²² and he had the following inscription included on his gravestone:

HE WAS LOVED
AND IS FONDLY REMEMBERED
BY ALL WHO KNEW HIM²³

In 1939, his parents were still living at 18 Chatsworth Street, where his father, at the age of 63, was still working underground as a colliery ripper.²⁴

John's brother Frank may have died in 1922.²⁵ His brother Evan probably married Elsie M. Wilton in 1932²⁶ and, in 1939, they were living at 89 Collins Avenue in Sutton-in-Ashfield.²⁷ Evan probably died the following year, 1940.²⁸ Annie married Mark Bradley, a colliery hewer, in 1930²⁹ and, in 1939, was living at 69 Meden Bank in Sutton-in-Ashfield.³⁰

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¹ "Nottinghamshire Baptisms Index 1538-1917," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 17 April 2019), entry for John Buckley

² "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 April 2019), entry for John Buckley, Registration district: Mansfield, Sub-registration district: Sutton in Ashfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 08, Piece: 3137, Folio: 183, Page: 22, Household schedule number: 127

³ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 22 April 2019), entry for Elizabeth E. Buckley, Ref: RG101/6237A/007/16 Letter code: RNPH

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 April 2019), entry for Thomas Buckley, Registration district: Mansfield, Inferred county: Nottinghamshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 164

⁶ "The hewer is the actual coal-digger. Whether the seam be so thin that he can hardly creep into it on hands and knees, or whether it be thick enough for him to stand upright, he is the responsible workman who loosens the coal from the bed." ("Mining Occupations," *Durham Mining Museum* (<http://www.dmm.org.uk/educate/mineocc.htm#s>: accessed 18 April 2019))

⁷ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 April 2019), entry for John Buckley

⁸ A "sub-contractor in charge of a "stall" or working place." ("Mining Occupations," *Durham Mining Museum* (<http://www.dmm.org.uk/educate/mineocc.htm#s>: accessed 18 April 2019))

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- ⁹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 April 2019), entry for John Buckley, Registration district: Mansfield, Registration district number: 428, Sub-registration district: Sutton-in-Ashfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 4, Piece: 2031
- ¹⁰ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 17 April 2019) entry for Buckley, Francis, Registration district: Mansfield, Volume 07B, Page 108
- ¹¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 17 April 2019) entry for Buckley, Evan Charles, Registration district: Mansfield, Volume 07B, Page 140
- ¹² "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 17 April 2019), entry for Annie Bradley, Ref: RG101/62391/007/27 Letter code: RNQA
- ¹³ Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratiuity.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 16 April 2019), entry for John Buckley
- ¹⁴ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 16 April 2019), entry for John Buckley
- ¹⁵ Gregson, Adrian (2004) *The 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment and the Great War – the Experience of a Territorial Battalion and its Home Towns*. PhD thesis, Coventry University in collaboration with National Museums on Merseyside. Unless otherwise specified, all information at the 1st/7th Battalion comes from this source.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 167
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 179
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 183
- ¹⁹ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 17 April 2019), entry for Buckley, J.
- 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=miikanNumber&SearchInText_1=2005082&Operator_1=AND&SearchIn_2=&SearchInText_2=AN&SearchIn_3=&SearchInText_3=&Level=&MaterialDateOperator=after&MaterialDate=&DigitalImages=1&Source=&ResultCount=10: accessed 28 March 2018)
- ²² "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 16 April 2019), entry for John Buckley
- ²³ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 17 April 2019), entry for Buckley, John Service No.: 99432
- ²⁴ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 21 April 2019), entry for Elizabeth E. Buckley
- ²⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 January 2019), entry for Francis Buckley, Registration district: Mansfield, Inferred county: Nottinghamshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 127
- ²⁶ "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2005," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 19 April 2019), entry for Evan C. Buckley, District: Mansfield, County: Nottinghamshire, Volume: 7B, Page: 241
- ²⁷ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 April 2019), entry for Evan Charles Buckley, Schedule number: 228, Sub-schedule Number: 1, Enumeration district: RNQC, Registration district: 428/2/A1
- ²⁸ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 April 2019), entry for Evan C. Buckley, Registration district: Mansfield, Inferred county: Nottinghamshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 148
- ²⁹ "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2005," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 19 April 2019), entry for Annie Buckley, District: Mansfield, County: Nottinghamshire, Volume: 7B, Page: 296

³⁰ "1939 Register," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 22 February 2019), entry for Annie Bradley, Ref: RG101/6239I/007/27 Letter code: RNQA