Private

WILLIAM JAMES PRING

204039 2nd Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (Formerly 7849 Cambridgeshire Regiment) Died of Wounds 6 March 1918 Aged 20

Buried Dozinghem Military Cemetery

The Pring family were, almost without exception, agricultural workers and, by the time of William's father's generation, solidly fixed in the Blackdown Hills. His grandfather Charles was born in Broadway, but was brought up in Buckland St Mary, and his grandmother Hannah was born at Haselbury Plucknett, near Crewkerne. But his father George and mother Annie (nee Every, daughter of Robert Every, a lime burner) were born in Buckland St Mary.

They had seven children, 3 boys and 4 girls, all of whom survived childhood; it was WW1 that took two of the boys, Walter and William. William, born on 31 July 1897, was fifth in the family; he was baptised at Otterford on the 12th September that year. William, and his brother Walter, went to Brown Down School; he started on the 17th March 1902 and left on the 27th July 1910, just before his thirteenth birthday.

The family had moved about within the area of Buckland St Mary and Otterford, no doubt following work. In 1891, George, before his marriage, was working as a Farm Carter for William Manley, the miller, at Otterford Mill. George and Annie married at Buckland on 27 April 1893; by 1901 George was working as a Carter at Howstead; they had 5 children. In 1911 they were living at Hornsey Cottages; 4 of the children were still at home, but the 2 older girls were working away, and Walter, now 16, was living and working just down the road at Madgeon Farm. William, aged 13, was living at home and working as a farm hand. Where else he may have worked in the time between 1911 and 1916 there's



unfortunately no record. The only possible clue is that when his brother Walter drew up his Army Will in 1915, the family were living at Tanlake Cottage, and that's the address given on Walter's 1916 death certificate. By the twenties they were at Westhay Cottage, now a ruin, beyond Westhay Farm on the Bishopswood road.

William probably didn't join up till 1916, by which time conscription obliged him to. No Service Records remain for him, but his Medal Roll Card (detailing which Service Medals were due to him) records no 1914-1915 Star (this indicates service abroad before the end of 1915). He enlisted in Yeovil, originally into the

Cambridgeshire Regiment, but was then transferred into a Regular Army Battalion, the 2nd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry; this is the Regiment named on his Medal Roll Card. Its traditional

soldiers were Yorkshire miners; by 1916 there must have been many other recruits like William, drafted in from all over the country.

"The 2/KOYLI was perhaps more constantly in action than any other unit of the Regiment, and, like other battalions on the Western Front, when not in action was either in the trenches or preparing for the next battle." *History of the KOYLI in the Great War 1914-1918 - R.C. Bond*

They were in Dublin when war was declared, so went straight to France, and were involved, with great losses, in the retreat from Mons and subsequent fighting. They continued to be heavily involved, serving in the Ypres Salient. There was a constant loss from enemy fire in day to day trench warfare. In 1915 they were among those who captured Hill 60, a prelude to the Second Battle of Ypres. Capture and re-capture went on throughout April and May, with heavy losses and little rest.

At the end of 1915 they were transferred to the 97th Brigade of the 37th Division. They moved south in 1916 to prepare for the Somme battles from July 1; they fought in the front line for 15 days: 42 other ranks dead, 242 wounded, 7 with shell-shock, 42 missing. They were then in reserve till November, when the last battle of the Somme campaign was fought on the 18th; again the losses were enormous: 14 officers and 351 other ranks killed or wounded.

Precisely when William Pring joined them we don't know; he wasn't 18 till July 1915, and, as we've noted, conscription wasn't introduced till 1916; his brother Walter was mortally wounded in the July Somme attacks, dying in England on July 31. This must have made William's conscription particularly hard for the family – so many families would have been affected in the same way. It is probable he was in the army before the end of 1916; the Battalion War Diary notes that on 14th October 1916 a draft of 100 men arrived – they had never been in France before and were mostly conscripts. This might have been William's draft. If so, he was unlucky enough to be there for the November 18 attacks - but he survived.

Until February the Battalion was then either in reserve, in training or forward in the trenches. February 10-12th saw a successful operation north east of Beaumont Hamel which "culminated in the capture of 600 yards of enemy ground and the enemy line of trenches at Ten Tree Alley". A similar pattern followed through the Spring, with another successful attack on April 2, and the capture of Fayet on the 14th, but with heavy losses.

The War Dairy records the outcome of the Battalion's Sports Day on April 30 (Walter wasn't among the winners!), and the arrival of another 100 plus men during the month; more joined in May, and continued to arrive each month.

At the end of May the Battalion transferred to XIV Corps, and travelled north to Doulieu. They were held in reserve for the Messines operation in early June, but weren't needed. Later that month they were posted to the area of Nieuport (by now a town in ruins), on the coast (the War Diary has a fine word picture of its state). They held the trenches there under prolonged intense fire over the summer months, training and improving their section, with periods in reserve, moving in July to Bray Dunes, and then to Dunkerque. A page of Battalion Orders for August 15, which we've copied, gives a clear account of day to day training life out of the trenches.

At this point they were in a fairly quiet part of the line, so that turns in the trenches were followed by training, route marches and even sea bathing. Between November 12 and 15 officers 'delivered lectures ..to the men on "Measures to be taken to avoid Trench feet", "The Offensive Spirit" and "The use of the Compass in warfare"....On the 16th ' the majority of the Battalion attended the Delousing Station at Poperinghe and the men had their clothing disinfected.'

It was a swampy coastal area with dykes and watercourses and a tidal flow which threatened the trenches. Quiet, but still a flow of dead and wounded day to day. On November 23rd the 2nd KOYLI



moved into trenches $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from Passchendaele; the description in the Regimental History evokes all one has heard about that dreadful place: 'Some idea of the difficulties of moving about this place of enduring hope may be gathered from the record that, before the forward companies completed the relief at 8pm, there were 30 casualties. The front line companies had to wade through mud that was knee deep, and the weight of battle stores carried was from 67-68 lbs per man.' – *The KOYLI in the Great War – R.C.Bond*

On December 1st they were part of an attack to attempt



to take the ridge before Westroosebeke from the enemy; the key was surprise, but there was bright moonlight that night, and this, added to the ground conditions, led to failure and the now expected awful toll of dead and wounded: some 20 officers killed or wounded, and 184 other ranks killed, wounded or missing.

Foot inspection in the trenches

At the end of December the Battalion moved to Zuofaques, near Calais. Their total strength was 588, but by the end of February this had been built back up to 1038. The early days of

1918 were quiet enough, but the German Spring Offensive (in which they overran the Allies by many miles) was looming – and known to be looming. They moved again to the Het Sas area (still in boggy Flanders) in January. Out of the trenches it was training, route marches and such routines as foot inspection: 'foot treatment at the pedicurium' becomes a common entry in the War Diary, the problem of trench feet being particularly pressing in such an area.

In the Front Line it was wiring, strafing and listening patrols. All routine stuff, but still with a now routine trickle of casualties. On March 5th the War Diary notes, while they were in Divisional Reserve:

'Training in musketry was carried out during the morning. At night the Battalion was employed in digging and revetting, draining, screening and tracklaying in Main Posts and Corps Line of Defence. 2nd Lieut. W. Beardsall and 2 other ranks were wounded while engaged on the working party.'

This was probably William Pring's almost unnoticed end: he died the next day, March 6th. The records of the Casualty clearing Station to which he must have been taken don't survive.

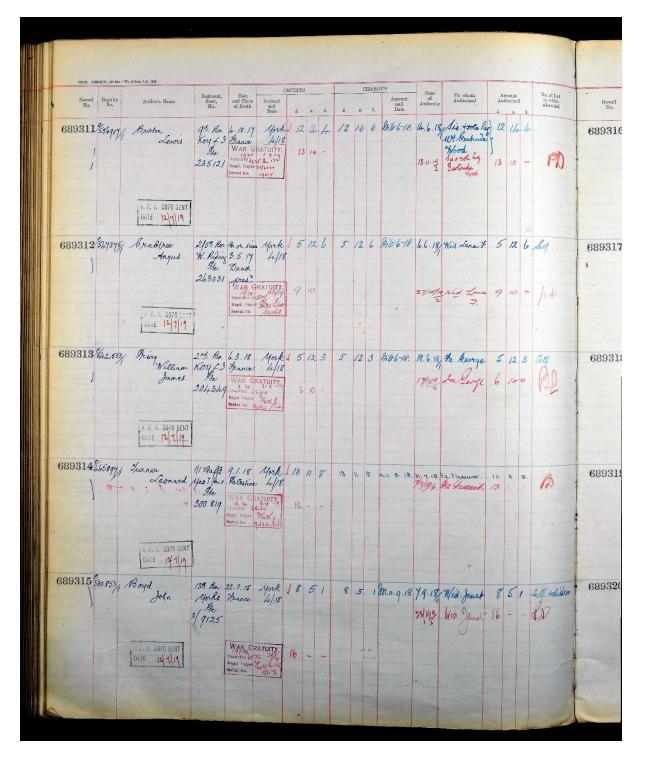
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

PRING FAMILY CENSUS DETAILS – SEE LISTING UNDER WALTER PRING'S NAME

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1006/1B		P. FERGUSSON	ARG & SUTH D HIGHRS.	6TH MARCH 1918	AGE 36	CROSS	13 G 20	2783
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1071/10		J.N. ARKLE	KING'S OWN YORKSHIRE L.I.	9TH MARCH 1918	AGE 19	CROSS	13 G 22	2785
	55350 2ND AIR MECH.	E.E. HILL	ROYAL FLYING CORPS	10TH MARCH 1918	AGE 37	CROSS	<u>13 G 23</u>	2786
1032/2A		FRANK YARWOOD	LOYAL NORTH LANCS.REGT.	12TH MARCH 1918	AGE 35	CROSS	13 G 24	2787
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1038/10	331976 LANCE CPL.	T.W. LODGE	THE KING'S LIVERPOOL REGT				<u>14 A 1</u>	2793
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PRINCE, 2nd Lt. William. 6th Bn. York and Lancaster Regt. 28th Aug., 1917. Age 20. Son of Capt. W. Prince, of South Parade, Northallerton. IV. E. 18.

PRING, Pte. William James, 204349. 2nd Bn. King's Own Yorkshire Light Inf. 6th March, 1918. Age 20. Son of George and Annie Pring, of Westhay Cottage, Buckland St. Mary, Chard. XIII. G. 19.

PRINGLE, Pte. H. N., 31400. 9th Bn. Northumberland Fusiliers. 21st Oct., 1917. X. E. 8.

PRITCHARD, Pte. Gerald Henry, 1384. 1st/5th Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regt. 6th Oct., 1917. Age 21. Son of Henry and Lizzie Pritchard, of Bellefield Rd., Dudley Rd., Birmingham. VII. I. 5.

PRITCHARD, Pte. W. J., 41142. 11th Bn. Manchester Regt. 6th Oct., 1917. VII. G. 13.

PROCTER, Gnr. Robert Cecil, 28185. "C" By. 12181 Bde. Royal Field Artillery. Died of wounds 24th Aug., 1917. Age 19. Son of Herbert Robert and Alice Maud Proctor, of 117, Fitzwilliam St., Huddersfield. III. H. 1.

PROCTOR, Serjt. M., 32543. 92nd Bty. 17th Bde. Royal Field Artillery. 13th Aug., 1917. III. G. 2.

PROUDE, Gnr. G., 2744. 58th Bde. Royal Field Artillery. 4th Oct., 1917. VI. E. 17.

PROUDFOOT, Pte. J., S/40622. 2nd Bn. Seaforth Highlanders. 7th Oct., 1917. VII. I. 12.

PROUT, Pte. A. G., 73683. 3rd Coy. Machine Gun Corps (Inf.). 10th Nov., 1917. XV. B. 18.

PRUDEN, Serjt. C. F., 39014. 35th Bn. Royal Fusiliers, transf. to (61208) 103rd Coy. Labour Corps. 8th Aug., 1917. II. F. 11.

PRYDE, Pte. Andrew Watt, 25059. "D" Coy. 1st Bn. King's Own Scottish Borderers. Died of wounds 16th Aug., 1917. Age 26. Son of Andrew Watt Pryde and Isabella Brown Pryde, of 31, Dalgleish St., Tayport, Fife. III. I. 12.

PUGH, Pte. G., 242525. 1st/5th Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regt. 13th Oct., 1917. X. F. 8.

PUGH, Pte. J. E., 2235. 1st/5th Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regt. 26th Aug., 1917. IV. E. 4.

PUGH, Pte. William Wynn, 201327. 1st/4th Bn. INDEX No. B. 16 King's Shropshire Light Inf. 30th Oct., 1917. DOZINGHEM Age 20. Son of William and Elizabeth Pugh, of MIL. CEM. Lilac Cottage, Llyndys Hill, Oswestry, Salop. BELGIUM X. A. 15.

PULLEY, Pte. Archibald Pitcairn, 42956. 16th Bn. Middlesex Regt. Died of wounds 14th Aug., 1917. Age 19. Son of Mr. A. C. Pulley, of 24, Hythe Park Rd., Staines, Middx. III. G. 13.

PULLIN, Lt. Bernard John, M.C. "D" Bty. 291st Bde. Royal Field Artillery. Died of wounds 21st Oct., 1917. Age 29. Son of James Henry and Marion Eugenie Pullin, of "Myoora," Grange Rd., Bushey, Herts. IX. C. 23.

PUMMELL, Pte. Ephraim, 475295. 88th Field Amb. Royal Army Medical Corps. Died of wounds 22nd Aug., 1917. Age 27. Son of Robert and Mary Ann Pummell; husband of Laura Alice Pummell, of 94, Muriel Rd., Christ Church Rd., Norwich. IV. G. 9.

PURCELL, Gnr. B., 140735. 212th Siege Bty. Royal Garrison Artillery. 12th Dec., 1917. XV. F. 13.

PURVES, Pte. Robert, 43831. 16th Bn. Royal Scots. 18th Oct., 1917. Age 20. Son of John Purves, of 7, Station Rd., Loanhead, Midlothian. XII. I. 8.

PYMAN, Pte. A. J. K., 240991. 7th Bn. Royal West Kent Regt. 13th Oct., 1917. X. F. 22.

PYNE, 2nd Lt. Ernest Sidney. 4th, attd. 9th Bn. West Yorkshire Regt. 12th Oct., 1917. Age 21. Son of Frank and Alice Pyne. Native of Muswell Hill, London. V. I. 10.

QUEEN, Spr. Herbert Carlton, 250046. "F" Corps Signal Coy. Royal Engineers. Died of wounds 29th Sept., 1917. Age 23. Son of Alfred Thomas and Mary Ann Queen, of Bagzel Throwley, Faversham, Kent. Native of Challock, Ashford, Kent. VII. F. 21.

QUINLAN, Lce. Cpl. J., 28599. 1st Bn. Border Regt. 2nd Oct., 1917. VI. G. 22.

QUINLAN, Cpl. T., 243472. 4th/5th Bn. Loyal North Lancs. Regt. 30th Oct., 1917. X. A. 18.

DOZINGHEM CEMETERY DETAILS

PART II. M-Z