

NICHOLAS ROBERT COLMAN

Born: 30th September 1897, Gunthorpe, Norfolk¹

Enlisted: Corporal (9566); 7th Battalion, the Norfolk Regiment



Died: 30 November 1917 - killed in action²

Age: 20

Memorial: Cambrai Memorial, Louverval (Panel 4, Stone H), France³

Medals: 1914-1915 Star British War Medal Victory Medal;⁴



Residence: Swanton Novers in 1911;⁵ in 1918 Nicholas's parents are living in The Street, Wood Norton.⁶

Nicholas Robert Colman was born on the 30th September 1897, and baptised on the 18th January 1898 in Gunthorpe parish church, the son of Daniel and Catherine Colman.⁷ (see Figure 1)

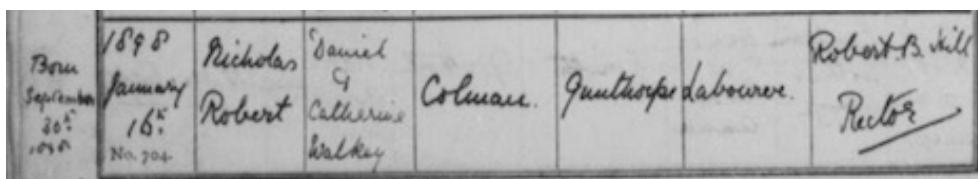


Figure 1: From the Baptisms Register, Gunthorpe, 1898

¹ Baptism Register, Gunthorpe, 1898 (www.familysearch.org); FreeBMD Quarter to December 1897, Walsingham, Vol 4b, p289 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

² CWGC commemoration (www.cwgc.org).

³ CWGC commemoration (www.cwgc.org).

⁴ British Army WW1 Medal Roll Index Cards, 1914-1920 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

⁵ 1911 census, Swanton Novers (Schedule 7) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

⁶ First Register of Parliamentary and Local Government Electors, 1918; Polling District: Foulsham, Parish: Wood Norton (Norfolk Heritage Centre, microfilm MF1038).

⁷ Baptism Register, Gunthorpe 1898 (www.familysearch.org); FreeBMD Quarter to December 1897, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.289 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

The surviving British Army WW1 Service Records 1914-1920 for Nicholas Robert Colman give his name as *Robert Nicholas* Colman, from Gunthorpe (in Norfolk), who enlisted in Norwich.⁸ The 7th Battalion, the Norfolk Regiment, was raised in Norwich in August 1914, as part of the Kitchener's First New Army (K1), and joined the 35th Brigade of the 12th Division. They mobilised for war on the 31st May 1915, landing at Boulogne, and engaged in various actions on the Western Front, including the Battle of Loos (1915), the Battle of Albert, the Battle of Pozieres and the Battle of Le Transloy (1916). In 1917 they were involved in the First Battle of the Scarpe, The Battle of Arleux, the Third Battle of the Scarpe, and the Cambrai operations.⁹

Nicholas was killed in action on the 30th November 1917, at Cambrai. He was 20 years old. The War Diary for the 7th Battalion, the Norfolk Regiment¹⁰ records that on that day, at

About 7am a very heavy Hun Barrage commenced, and at 7.40am he attacked, in mass in enormous numbers, from Gonnellieu, which he had just previously taken about 7.35am, and also from Banteaux. The Bosh attacked the Battalion from the right flank and the front. Our Lewis guns did splendid work, mowing down the enemy in large numbers, but by weight of numbers, he forced the Battalion to face back on to Battalion Headquarters in Bleak Trench and a strong point on our left front. The Hun succeeded in surrounding many of our men, who were thereby forced to surrender. We made a splendid fight and accounted for enormous numbers of the enemy.

Casualties amongst the 'Rank and File' were: Killed 27, Wounded 89, Missing 204, Wounded and Missing 13. The War Diary entry finishes with a note that:

During the Hun Counter Attack, the War Diary for November was unfortunately lost, and the months' Diary had to be compiled from the only information available, which was very little indeed.*

** for "lost", read "destroyed when the enemy attacked on Nov 30th".*

Nicholas's name is recorded on the Cambrai Memorial, which commemorates more than 7,000 servicemen of the United Kingdom and South Africa who died in the Battle of Cambrai in November and December 1917 whose graves are not known. The method of assault for the Cambrai operations was new, using tanks to break through the German wire with the infantry following under the cover of smoke barrages; but no preliminary artillery bombardment. The attack began early on the 20th November 1917 and initial advances were remarkable, but by 22nd November a halt was called for rest and reorganisation which allowed the Germans to reinforce. From 23rd to 28th November, fighting was concentrated almost entirely around Bourlon Wood and by 29th November, it was clear that the Germans were ready for a major counter attack. During the fierce fighting of the next five days, much of the ground gained in the initial days of the attack was lost.¹¹

The Record of Soldiers Effects lists Nicholas as a Corporal and records that £14 19s 10d was paid to his father, Daniel, in April 1918, with a War Gratuity of £12 10s being paid in November

⁸ UK Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-1919 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

⁹ See <https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/units/276/norfolk-regiment>.

¹⁰ UK, WW1 War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹¹ CWGC information for the Cambrai Memorial (www.cwgc.org).

1919.¹² Nicholas was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, and Victory Medal (see Figure 2).

| Name | Corps | Rank | Regtl. No. |
|--------------------------------|--------|---------|------------|
| COLMAN | 7/11 | Platoon | 9566 |
| Robert N. | | | |
| Medal | Roll | Page | Remarks |
| VICTORY | K/1102 | C/4 789 | |
| BRITISH | do. | do | |
| 15 STAR | K/1102 | B/105 | |
| Theatre of War first served in | | | |
| Date of entry therein | | | |
| 11 France | | | |
| 10/12/15 | | | |
| K 1586. | | | |

Figure 2: British Army WW1 Medal Roll Index Card for Nicholas Robert Colman

In February 1919, Nicholas's mother, Catherine, applied to the British Ministry for Pensions for a Dependant's Pension.¹³ In May 1919 Catherine was awarded a pension of 5s per week, which appears to have been backdated to the 6th November 1918 (see Figure 3).¹⁴ The Dependant's Pension card has been amended to record that Catherine had died (she died in 1935), and to change the dependant's name to Nicholas's father, Daniel Colman.

| DEPENDANT'S PENSION. | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Name | Colman Robert Nicholas |
| Regiment or Ship | Norfolk |
| Documents received from Paymaster | 28-2-19 |
| Date and cause of death | Nov 30 - 1914 Killed in action |
| Dependant | Mrs Catherine W. Colman Daniel |
| Address | Wood Norton Dereham Norfolk |
| Relationship | Mother Father |
| Pension | 5/- a week from 6-11-18. (21-10) |
| Date awarded | 13-5-19 |
| Papers | reason { P.V. |
| F6496 18149/875 50m (72) 2/18 J.F. Gp. 159 F7622 4118/1048 100m (72) 5/18 | |

Figure 3: Dependant's Pension card in respect of Nicholas Robert Colman

Further research into Nicholas' family reveals that his father, Daniel Colman was baptised on the 29th December, 1867 in Briningham parish church, the son of Andrew and Celia Colman.¹⁵ Daniel married Catherine Walkey Ledner on the 26th December 1886 in Briningham parish church.¹⁶ In the 1911 census for Swanton Novers, Daniel is recorded as aged 41, and a farm

¹² UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹³ See <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/research/military-records/ww1-pension-records-cards.htm>; <https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/ancestry-pension-records/>.

¹⁴ UK, WW1 Pension Ledgers and Index Cards, 1914-1923 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹⁵ Baptism Register, Briningham, 1867 (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD, Quarter to March 1868, Walsingham, Vol. 4b, p. 307 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

¹⁶ Marriage Register, Briningham, 1886 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

labourer; he died in Fakenham in 1950, aged 79, and is buried in Wood Norton.¹⁷ Catherine was baptised on the 6th October 1859, in Morston parish church, the daughter of John and Mary Ledner.¹⁸ She died in 1935, aged 76, and is buried in Wood Norton.¹⁹

The 1911 census reveals that the family were living in Spalding Lane, Swanton Novers.²⁰ They had ten children, seven of whom were recorded at home when the census was taken:

| Name | Born | Died |
|----------------|---|--|
| Lilian Blanche | 1887, Briningham. ²¹ In the 1911 census (Briston) she is aged 24 and boarding with the Butters family. ²² She married (i) Elgar Woods, 1912 (d. 1918), ²³ and (ii) Frederick Fish, 1923. ²⁴ | 1968 (Norwich), aged 81. ²⁵ |
| Henry George | 1888, Gunthorpe. ²⁶ In the 1911 census he is aged 23, and a waggoner on a farm. He served with the Sherwood Foresters in WW1 and died of wounds. | 31 st October 1916, aged 28, the Somme. |
| Rosa Ellen | 1889, Gunthorpe; baptised 5 th January 1890. ²⁷ In the 1911 census (Briningham) she is aged 21, and a domestic servant with the Westcott family. ²⁸ She married Charles J Clitheroe in 1912 ²⁹ (he died in 1918, aged 27). ³⁰ | 1970, aged 81. ³¹ The date of birth noted on the death record is 10 th November 1889. |
| Albert Richard | 10 th February 1892, Gunthorpe; baptised 24 th April 1892. ³² In the 1911 census he is aged 19, and a farm labourer. It is possible that he served in WW1, in the Norfolk, Devon and Hampshire Regiments. | 1949, aged 56. ³³ |

¹⁷ *Transcript and Index to Wood Norton, Norfolk, Parish Registers*, compiled by Keith and Shirley Howell (February 2000), Burials, 1950 (p.132).

¹⁸ Baptism Register, Morston, 1859 (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD, *Quarter to December 1859, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.315* (www.freebmd.org.uk).

¹⁹ *Transcript and Index to Wood Norton, Norfolk, Parish Registers*, compiled by Keith and Shirley Howell (February 2000), Burials, 1935 (p.132).

²⁰ 1911 census, Swanton Novers (Schedule 7) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

²¹ FreeBMD, *Quarter to March 1887, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.308* (www.freebmd.org.uk).

²² 1911 census, Briston (Schedule 98) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

²³ FreeBMD, *Quarter to June 1912, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.604* (www.freebmd.org.uk).

²⁴ FreeBMD, *Quarter to June 1923, Aylsham, Vol.4b, p.175* (www.freebmd.org.uk).

²⁵ FreeBMD, *Quarter to December 1968, Norwich, Vol.4b, p.801* (www.freebmd.org.uk).

²⁶ FreeBMD, *Quarter to March 1888, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.333* (www.freebmd.org.uk).

²⁷ FreeBMD, *Quarter to December 1889, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.291* (www.freebmd.org.uk).

²⁸ 1911 census, Briningham (Schedule 42) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

²⁹ FreeBMD, *Quarter to December 1912, Worksop, Vol.7b, p.129* (www.freebmd.org.uk).

³⁰ FreeBMD, *Quarter to December 1918, Aylsham, Vol.4b, p.160* (www.freebmd.org.uk).

³¹ FreeBMD, *Quarter to June 1970, North Walsham, Vol.4b, p.1657* (www.freebmd.org.uk).

³² Baptism Register, Gunthorpe, 1892 (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD *Quarter to June 1892, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.299* (www.freebmd.org.uk).

³³ FreeBMD, *Quarter to March 1949, East Retford, Vol.3c, p.245* (www.freebmd.org.uk).

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| John William | 10 th February 1893, Gunthorpe; baptised 18 th June 1893. ³⁴ In the 1911 census he is aged 17, and a cattle tender on a farm. | |
| Thomas Charles | 12 th December 1894, Gunthorpe; baptised 23rd January 1895. ³⁵ In the 1911 census he is aged 16, and a yard boy on a farm. He served with the Royal Artillery in WW1 and survived the conflict. He married Susan Towell in 1924. ³⁶ | |
| Agnes Nora | 14 th April 1896, Gunthorpe; baptised 21 st June 1896. ³⁷ In the 1911 census, she is aged 14 and visiting Mrs Elizabeth Fox in Spalding Lane, Swanton Novers. ³⁸ She married William Marshall in 1920. ³⁹ | 1973, aged 77. ⁴⁰ |
| Nicholas Robert | 30 th September 1897, Gunthorpe. In the 1911 census he is aged 13, and doing odd jobs on a farm. | 30 November 1917, aged 20, Cambrai. |
| Horace Reginald | 6 th February 1900, Gunthorpe; baptised 17 th June 1900. ⁴¹ In the 1911 census he is aged 11, and at school. He married Lily Elizabeth Smith on the 4 th July 1931, in Wood Norton. ⁴² | 26 th January 1991, West Yorkshire, aged 90. ⁴³ |
| Celia Gladys Kathleen | 15 th May 1902, Gunthorpe; baptised 15 th June 1902. ⁴⁴ In the 1911 census she is aged 8, and at school. She married James Archibald Edge on the 25 th December 1929, in Wood Norton. ⁴⁵ | 1979, Norfolk, aged 77. ⁴⁶ |

³⁴ Baptism Register, Gunthorpe, 1893 (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD Quarter to June 1893, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.305 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

³⁵ Baptism Register, Gunthorpe, 1895 (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD Quarter to March 1895, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.311 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

³⁶ FreeBMD, Quarter to December 1924, Worksop, Vol.7b, p.38 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

³⁷ Baptism Register, Gunthorpe, 1896 (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD Quarter to June 1896, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.291 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

³⁸ 1911 census, Swanton Novers (Schedule 6) (www.ancestry.co.uk).

³⁹ FreeBMD, Quarter to September 1920, Norwich Vol. 4b, p.475 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

⁴⁰ FreeBMD, Quarter to December 1973, North Walsham, Vol.4b, p.1832 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

⁴¹ Baptism Register, Gunthorpe, 1900 (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD Quarter to March 1900, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.303 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

⁴² FreeBMD, Quarter to September 1931, Aylsham, Vol.4b, p.189 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

⁴² FreeBMD, Quarter to September 1920, Norwich Vol. 4b, p.475 (www.freebmd.org.uk); Transcript and Index to Wood Norton, Norfolk, Parish Registers, compiled by Keith and Shirley Howell (February 2000), Marriages, 1931 (p.105).

⁴³ UK, Burial and Cremation Index, 1576-2014 (www.ancestry.co.uk); England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

⁴⁴ Baptism Register, Gunthorpe, 1902 (www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD Quarter to June 1902, Walsingham, Vol.4b, p.280 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

⁴⁵ FreeBMD, Quarter to December 1929, Aylsham, Vol.4b, p.252 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

⁴⁵ FreeBMD, Quarter to September 1920, Norwich Vol. 4b, p.475 (www.freebmd.org.uk); Transcript and Index to Wood Norton, Norfolk, Parish Registers, compiled by Keith and Shirley Howell (February 2000), Marriages, 1929 (p.105).

⁴⁶ FreeBMD, Quarter to September 1979, Norwich, Vol.10, p.1397 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

The surviving army service records show that two of Nicholas's older brothers served in WW1:

- Henry George: he died of wounds, aged 28, on the 31st October 1916. He is buried in the St Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen. He served with the 17th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derby Regiment); Private 27814. Henry's *Record of Soldiers Effects* show that £8 12s 6d was paid to Henry's father, Daniel, in March 1917, with a War Gratuity of £5 paid in October 1919.⁴⁷
- Thomas Charles: he enlisted aged 21 on the 11th January 1916 in Newcastle upon Tyne. Thomas was a cowman, working on Jubilee Farm, Blyth, Rotherham.⁴⁸ He was a Driver with the Royal Field Artillery (Regimental No. 141180). He survived the conflict and was awarded the Victory and British War medals.⁴⁹

There are some surviving army service records which indicate that another brother, Albert Richard, may also have served in WW1, in the Norfolk, Devon and Hampshire Regiments; Albert would have been aged 22 when the war broke out. Unfortunately, the army service records do not appear to have survived for John William Colman, who would have been aged 21 when war broke out, and whilst there are several Medal Roll Index cards for John, without a service number it is not possible to identify which of these might be Nicholas's brother.

⁴⁷ CWGC *Commonwealth War Graves Registration records* (www.cwgc.org); UK Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919 (www.ancestry.co.uk); UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

⁴⁸ British Army WW1 Service Records 1914-1920 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

⁴⁹ British Army WW1 Medal Roll Index Cards, 1914-1920 (www.ancestry.co.uk).