

Private George Percy Fry
Regimental Number: 53051
11th Manchester Regiment

born: 1895 - died: 19 May 1918

George Percy Fry's family lost a lot. George was the second youngest of five children born to Samson and Ellen Fry of Darenth (near Dartford), Kent.¹ The eldest – a daughter, Phyllis Maud – was born in 1887,² but died at the age of 11.³ A second daughter, Lilian Jane, was born in 1889.⁴ The Frys then had three sons: Cyril Charles, born in 1891,⁵ George Percy (known as Percy), born in 1895⁶ and Maurice Oliver, born in 1898.⁷ Both Cyril and Percy served in World War I and both lost their lives.

George's father, Samson Fry, had lost his own father when he was very young. His mother, Lucy Fry, remarried when Samson was 3⁸ and he was brought up with his step-father, John Barney, an agricultural labourer, and his half-brothers.⁹ Samson himself died just before the war.¹⁰

Samson Fry was a general labourer in 1901¹¹ and, by 1911, was a general labourer at an "imbecile asylum." He was also recorded as being an army pensioner, however, no record of his army service has been found. In 1911, the family was living at 3 Cannon's Cottages, Lane End, Dartford. His brother, Cyril, was a farm labourer and Percy, who was 15, was a domestic garden boy.¹²

Cyril was the first to enlist. He enlisted in Dartford, Kent, initially in the London Regiment (Regimental number 5899) but then transferred to the 10th Battalion of the Welsh Regiment.¹³ In 1916, he married Mabel M. Inkpin in Dartford,¹⁴ but he was killed in action a year later. He died on 31 July 1917 and is buried in New Irish Farm Cemetery in Ypres, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.¹⁵

Percy enlisted in Gravesend, Kent, initially in the Royal Fusiliers (Regimental number 64661). He was a Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps (Regimental number T2/015645), attached at the time to the Royal Engineers, when he disembarked on 31 July 1915. He later transferred to the 11th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment.¹⁶

In mid-May 1918, the 11th Battalion was in Mazingarbe, near Béthune, in the Pas-de-Calais.¹⁷ Early on the morning of 19 May, several companies of the 11th Battalion began the attack on the German-held Hilda trench with battery-fired gas shells and an artillery barrage. At the end of the day, German casualties were considerable, including a number taken prisoner. On the British side, "P Company's casualties were mostly through machine gun fire. The War Diary records that two other ranks were killed, two missing and two missing believed killed. 21 men were wounded in the raid."¹⁸ Percy may have been one of them. However, "records produced after the war show that eight men from the 11th Battalion were killed on 18th May 1918 (which differs from the War Diary)."¹⁹ Percy is not listed among the eight men, but perhaps this is because he did not die until the following day.

Percy was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 18 May with shrapnel wound to the left thigh and a compound fracture of the right leg. He died the following day and was buried the same day in the Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 1, Row E, Grave 39), near the small town of Pernes-en-Artois in France. J. K. Tibbits was the officiating chaplain.

On 18 May, 199 soldiers were admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, bringing the total number of patients to 376.²⁰ In the whole month of May, there were 115 deaths at this CCCS – 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.²¹

Percy's mother, living at Lane End, near Dartford, was notified of his death.²² Payments of monies owing to him after his death appear to have been made to his mother, his sister (Lilian), his brother (Maurice) and his sister-in-law (Mabel, the widow of his brother Cyril²³).²⁴

Percy received 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).²⁵

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¹ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2014), entry for Percy Fry, Registration district: Dartford, Registration District Number: 43, Sub-registration district: Dartford, ED, institution, or vessel: 23, Piece: 707, Folio: 6, Page Number: 4, Household schedule number: 23

² "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2014), entry for Phyllis Maud Fry, Registration district: Dartford, Inferred County: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 489

³ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2014), entry for Phyllis Maud Fry, Registration district: Dartford, Inferred County: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 304

⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2014), entry for Lilian Jane Fry, Registration district: Dartford, Inferred County: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 480

⁵ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2014), entry for Cyril Charles Fry, Registration district: Dartford, Inferred County: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 483

⁶ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2014), entry for George Percy Fry, Registration district: Dartford, Inferred County: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 510

⁷ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2014), entry for Maurice Oliver Fry, Registration district: Dartford, Inferred County: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 535

⁸ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2014), entry for John Barney Fry, Registration district: Dartford, County: Kent, Volume: 5, Page: 129

⁹ "1861 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 25 November 2014), entry for John Barney, Registration district: Dartford, Enumeration district: 7, Piece number: 468, Folio number: 10, Page number: 15

¹⁰ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2014), entry for Samson C. Fry, Registration district: Dartford, Inferred County: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 721

¹¹ "1901 England Census," entry for Percy Fry

¹² "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2014), entry for Percy Fry, Registration district: Dartford, Registration District Number: 43, Sub-registration district: Dartford, ED, institution, or vessel: 1, Household schedule number: 131, Piece: 3763

¹³ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 November 2014), entry for Charles Cyril Fry

¹⁴ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 23 November 2014), entry for Cyril C. Fry, District: Dartford, County: Kent, Volume: 2A, Page: 1340

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- ¹⁵ "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," (www.cwgc.org; accessed 24 November 2014), entry for Fry, C.C.
- ¹⁶ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 November 2014), entry for Percy Fry
- ¹⁷ "The Manchester Regiment 1899 - 1958 The Eleventh Battalion," (www.themanchesters.org/11th%20batt.htm; accessed 23 November 2014)
www.themanchesters.org
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ "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=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 15 December 2014)
- ²¹ "Pernes British Military Cemetery" *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>; accessed 13 January 2015)
- ²² "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 497
- ²³ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 3 September 2014), entry for Cyril C. Fry, District: Dartford, County: Kent, Volume: 2A, Page: 1340
- ²⁴ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 19 January 2015), entry for Percy Fry
- ²⁵ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 22 November 2014), entry for Percy Fry