Private George Johnson
Regimental number: 11511
4th (City of London) Battalion (Royal Fusiliers)

born: about 1899 - died: 27 April 1916

Private George Johnson, born in about 1899 in Shelton, Staffordshire, was the son of James and Mary Jane Johnson.[1] James was born in about 1860 also in Shelton and Mary Jane (née Clark) in about 1862 near Malkins Bank, in Cheshire. James (son of James Johnson) and Mary Jane (daughter of Thomas Clark) were married on 17 January 1881 at St John the Evangelist church in Trent Vale, near Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire.[2] They had ten children, eight of whom survived to 1911.[3] The eight children who survived were Florence (born in about 1881),[4] Fredrick Henry (born in about 1882),[5] Alice Emily (born in about 1886),[6] Tom Clarke (born in about 1888),[7] Isabella M. (born in about 1890),[8] James (born in about 1893),[9] George and Annie (born in about 1903).[10]

George's father, James, was a carpenter. In 1881 and 1891, the family was living on Bedford Street in Shelton, near Stoke-on-Trent.[11] By 1901, the family had moved a few miles away to 36 Wilton Street, Cross Heath, near Newcastle-under-Lyme.[12] James was working as a railway carpenter. The family was at the same address and James was still a railway carpenter in 1911.[13] Mary Jane was doing "home work."

George enlisted in Newcastle as a Private in the 4th (City of London) Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers[14] and joined the British Expeditionary Force in France on 25 September 1915.

In late April 1916, the 4th Battalion was stationed near Metern in northern France.[15] On 26 April, the Battalion was in the trenches where there was heavy shelling by trench mortars and guns. Two officers were injured, six Other Ranks were killed and 28 injured, mostly by shell fire. The shelling continued intermittently during the following day, causing heavy damage to the British trenches. Another fourteen soldiers were wounded. It is possible that George was wounded on one of these days because he died of wounds to his head, back and both legs on 27 April at 10.50 p.m.[16] He died at the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, which was stationed near Bailleul in France.[17] On the 27th, there was brisk air combat over the 1st CCCS at daybreak. During the day, two patients died. Perhaps George was one of them.

George was a member of the Church of England[18] and was buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Plot II, Row D, Grave 142).[19] Bailleul is in France, close to the Belgian border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several Casualty Clearing Stations, including the 1st Canadian, were quartered there for considerable periods. The earliest Commonwealth burials at Bailleul were made in April 1915. An extension was built and burials continued until April 1918, and occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when graves were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.[20]

A letter was sent to his mother to notify her of his death.[21] She also received the monies owing to him from the army after his death.[22] It is not clear if any of George's brothers served in the Great War.

George was awarded 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).[23]

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[6] "Staffordshire baptisms," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 8 September 2015), entry for Alice Emily Johnson, Archive reference: D4904/1/4, Page: 182
[7] "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 September 2015), entry for Tom Clarke Johnson, Registration district: Stoke upon Trent, Inferred County: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 203
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[9] "1901 England Census," entry for George Johnson
[10] "1911 England Census," entry for George Johnson
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[13] "1911 England Census," entry for George Johnson
[14] "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 September 2015), entry for George Johnson
[15] "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 September 2015), Regiment or Unit: Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment), Sub Unit: 4th Battalion, Division: 3rd Division, Diary Entry Start Date: 1914, Diary Dates: 1914 Jan 1 - 1915 Dec 31, Piece Description: Piece 1431/1-3: 9 Infantry Brigade: 4 Battalion Royal Fusiliers (1914 Aug - 1919 Apr), Piece Number: 1431
[16] "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIIC10, volume 4556, Record number 62
[17] "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=FIND&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 17 June 2015)
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[19] "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," (www.cwgc.org; accessed 2 September 2015), entry for Johnson, G., Service No: 11511
[20] "Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000047/Bailleul%20Communal%20Cemetery,%20Nord; accessed 5 August 2015)
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