

Gunner John William Watson

Regimental number: 92447

"D" Battery, 246th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery

born: 5 August 1891 - died: 18 September 1918

Gunner John William Watson was born on 5 August 1891 in Rawtenstall, Lancashire.¹ His mother was Alice Elizabeth Watson.² She was baptised in Newchurch in the Borough of Rossendale, Lancashire in 1871, the daughter of William and Emma Watson.³ Her parents, William and Emma (the former Emma Langley), were both born in Cambridgeshire,⁴ but married in 1870 in Haslingden, Lancashire.⁵ It appears that Emma remarried in 1881, marrying Robert Johnson in Haslingden,⁶ although it not certain what had become of her first husband, William.

John had a younger sister, Emma, born in 1897 also in Haslingden.⁷ In 1901, both children were living with their mother in the home of their mother's mother, Emma, and her second husband, Robert.⁸ Robert was a stone quarryman and the family was living at 6 Fallburn Fold in Rawtenstall. In 1911, the two children were still living with Emma and Robert at 4 Starford Place in Rochdale.⁹ Their mother was not with them. John, then aged 19, was working as a card room labourer.

On 17 May 1913, in Newchurch, John married Mary Beatrice Hoyle,¹⁰ who was born in Haslingden in 1891,¹¹ the daughter of George H. and Alice Hoyle.¹² In their banns, John's father was identified as Johnson Watson – perhaps this was a (misreported) identification of his long-term relationship with his mother's stepfather, Robert Johnson. John and Mary subsequently had a daughter, Anne born late in 1913.¹³

John enlisted as a Gunner in the Royal Field Artillery in Rawtenstall.¹⁴ On 18 September 1918, he was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with shrapnel wounds to his back, which penetrated his right lung and right underarm, and a head fracture.¹⁵ He died the same day and was buried the following day in Duisans British Military Cemetery (Grave 16, Plot 6, Row H) with the chaplain W. Fisher presiding. Since John left no effects and the chaplain had no information on his next of kin, he wrote to his unit's adjutant to notify him of his death.

Duisans British Military Cemetery is located in Etrun, near Arras, in France. The first burials took place in the cemetery in March 1917.¹⁶ The 1st CCCS arrived at the beginning of September and was stationed near Duisans for two months in the autumn of 1918.¹⁷ A total of 75 patients died at the 1st CCCS in September 1918.

John was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).¹⁸

John's wife received the monies owing to him from the army after his death.¹⁹ At some point after the war, Mary Beatrice Watson was living at 9 Higher Scout, Waterfoot, near Manchester. In 1920, she remarried, marrying Ashworth Row,²⁰ and they had a son, James, in 1921.²¹ Ashworth served in the Great War in The King's (Liverpool) Regiment, Scottish Battalion (Regimental number: 357354) and served in France.²²

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- ¹ "Certified copy of an entry of a birth," General Register Office, entry for John William Watson, Registration district of Haslingden, Sub-district of Newchurch in the County of Lancaster.
- ² Various records for Alice Elizabeth show her name also as Elizabeth Alice, Elizabeth A. or Alice E.
- ³ "England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NNKH-Q5T>; accessed 9 December 2015), entry for Elizabeth Alice Watson, 1871; Reference - 2:2JJRTZ9; FHL microfilm 1,736,999.
- ⁴ "1871 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 9 December 2015), entry for Emma Watson, Registration district: Haslingden, Sub-registration district: Newchurch, ED, institution, or vessel: 23, Household schedule number: 106, Piece: 4136, Folio: 37, Page Number: 20
- ⁵ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 14 December 2015), entry for William Watson, Registration district: Haslingden, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume 8e, Page: 202
- ⁶ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 9 December 2015), entry for Robert Johnson, Registration district: Haslingden, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume 8e, Page: 263
- ⁷ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 14 December 2015), entry for Emma Watson, Registration district: Haslingden, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 95
- ⁸ "1901 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk; accessed 14 December 2015), entry for John Wm Watson, Registration district: Haslingden, Archive reference: RG13, Piece number: 3850, Folio: 68, Page: 6
- ⁹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 5 December 2015), entry for John William Watson, Registration district: Rochdale, Registration District Number: 470, Sub-registration district: Whitworth and Wardle, ED, institution, or vessel: 92, Piece: 24668
- ¹⁰ "England Marriages, 1538-1973," *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:NNHW-SP1>; accessed 5 December 2015), entry for John William Watson and Mary Beatrice Hoyle, 17 May 1913; citing Newchurch In Rossendale, Lancashire, England, Reference 2:39RFSQK; FHL microfilm 1,737,001.
- ¹¹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 15 December 2015), entry for Mary Beatrice Hoyle, Registration district: Haslingden, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 103
- ¹² "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 14 December 2015), entry for Ethel Hoyle, Registration district: Haslingden, ED, institution, or vessel: 19, Piece: 3347, Folio: 138, Page Number: 25; "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 14 December 2015), entry for Mary Beatrice Aoye, Registration district: Haslingden, Sub-registration district: Rawtenstall, ED, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 3849, Folio: 75, Page Number: 6, Household schedule number: 43
- ¹³ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 14 December 2015), entry for Anne Watson, Registration district: Haslingden, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 157
- ¹⁴ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 29 November 2015), entry for John William Watson
- ¹⁵ "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 IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 661
- ¹⁶ "Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org; accessed 7 October 2015)
- 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=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 17 June 2015)
- ¹⁸ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 29 November 2015), entry for John Wm Watson
- ¹⁹ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 29 November 2015), entry for John Watson

²⁰ “England & Wales, Marriage Index, 1916-2005,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 December 2015), entry for Mary B. Watson, Registration district: Haslingden, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume Number: 8e, Page Number: 489

²¹ “England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 December 2015), entry for James Row, Registration district: Haslingden, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 137

²² “British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 December 2015), entry for Ashworth Row