Private Casson Stephenson©
Regimental Number: 221217
11th Trench Mortar Battery, Royal Field Artillery

born: 1898 - died: 22 May 1918

Casson Stephenson[1] was born in Eskdale, Cumberland in the 2nd Quarter of 1898[2] and was probably the youngest of fourteen children born to Joseph and Dorothy Stephenson[3]—ten of whom had survived to 1911.[4] Joseph was born in 1850 in Ulverston, Lancashire[5] and Dorothy Skirrah[6] was born about 1850 in Burton, Westmorland.[7] Joseph and Dorothy married in 1873 in Bootle, Cumberland.[8] Casson's older siblings[9] were Stephen (born in 1873),[10] Margaret (born in 1875),[11] William (born in 1877),[12] Joseph (born in 1879),[13] Grace (born in 1881, but probably died in 1888),[14] John (born in 1883),[15] Elizabeth Hannah (born in 1886),[16] Sarah (born in 1887),[17] David (born in 1889, but died the same year),[18] Thomas (born in 1890)[19] and Annie (born in 1895).[20]

In 1881, Joseph and his young family were living at Pannelholme, near Bottle. He was farming 240 acreas and employed one man and a girl. No census record was found for the family in 1891 but, in 1901, they were at Birkerthwaite, Bottle and, in 1911, at Lady Hall in Broughton in Furness, Lancashire.

Casson enlisted in High Wycombe for service as a gunner in the Royal Horse Artillery and Royal Field Artillery. The Royal Field Artillery was one element of three in the Royal Regiment of Artillery. It was the "most numerous arm of the artillery, the horse-drawn RFA was responsible for the medium calibre guns and howitzers deployed close to the front line and was reasonably mobile. It was organised into brigades."[21] The military historian, John Terraine, wrote "The war of 1914-18 was an artillery war: artillery was the battle-winner, artillery was what caused the greatest loss of life, the most dreadful wounds, and the deepest fear."[22] When he died, he was serving with the 11th Trench Mortar Battery of the Royal Field Artillery.

He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 21 May 1918 with shrapnel wounds to his neck and chest. He died the following day and was buried the same day in the Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 1, Row F, Grave 34). Casson was identified as a member of the Church of England and the presiding chaplain was J. K. Tibbits. His mother, then living at Lady Hall, Thwaits, near Broughton-in-Furnace, Lancashire was notified of his death. He was just 20 years old. His father received the monies the army owed Casson upon his death.[23]

On 21 May, 294 soldiers were admitted to No. 1 CCCS, bringing the total number of patients to 337.[24] 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 No. 1 CCCS was in Pernes. The Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCS came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.[25]

Casson was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).[26]

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[1] Casson's name is recorded at Stevenson in No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station journal ("Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Library and Archives Canada, (records accessed 2013 and 2014), Record Group 9, series IIIC10, volume 4556, Record number

513). However, it appears from the UK war service and census records that his name was actually Stephenson.

[2] "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 December 2014), entry for Casson Stephenson, Registration district: Bootle, Inferred County: Cumberland, Volume: 10b, Page: 713

[3] "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," (www.cwgc.org; accessed 18 December 2014), entry for Stephenson, Casson, Service No: 221217

[4] "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 December 2014), entry for Casson Stephenson, Registration district: Bootle, Registration District Number: 578, Sub-registration district: Bootle, ED, institution, or vessel: 7, Piece: 31542

[5] "England & Wales births 1837–2006," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 17 December 2014), entry for Joseph Stephenson, District: Ulverston, County: Lancashire, Volume: 25, Page: 211

[6] In almost all census records, Joseph's wife is identified as Dorothy and there is a record for a marriage between Joseph Stephenson and Dorothy Skirrah in 1873. However, in the 1911 census, Joseph's wife is recorded as Mary and they have been married for 36 years, which is somewhat consistent with a marriage in 1873. In addition, a Dorothy Stephenson died in Ulverston, Lancashire in 1905. There is no reason to believe that Joseph's wife was other than Dorothy Skirrah. However, there are many variations on the spelling of her maiden name in the birth records of her children— Skerry, Skerrey, Skirrow and Skerrow.

[7] "1901 England Census," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 December 2014), entry for Joseph Stephenson, Registration district: Bootle (Cumberland), Sub-registration district: Muncaster, ED, institution, or vessel: 1, Piece: 4898, Folio: 5, Page Number: 2, Household schedule number: 10

[8] "England and Wales, Marriage Registration Index," *Family Search* (www.Familysearch.org: accessed 23 March 2015), entry for Joseph Stephenson, Registration District: Bootle (Cumberland), County: Cumberland, Volume: 10B, Page: 1135, Line Number: 91

[9] One sibling could not be identified.

[10] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Stephenson, Stephen, Volume 08E, Page 776

[11] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Stephenson, Margaret, Volume 08E, Page 811

[12] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Stephenson, William, Volume 010B, Page 696

[13] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Stephenson, Joseph, Volume 010B, Page 659

[14] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Stephenson, Grace, Volume 010B, Page 672. Grace was born in the 2nd Quarter of 1881. Another daughter, Agnes, appears in the 1881 census, age 1 month. This is probably the same person as Grace, but no record was found of her name as Grace Agnes or Agnes Grace. A Grace Stephenson died at the age of 7, in 1888 ("England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 November 2016), entry for Grace Stephenson, Registration district: Bootle, Inferred county: Cumberland, Volume: 10b, Page: 385)

[15] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Stephenson, John, Volume 010B, Page 675

[16] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Stephenson, Elizabeth Hannah, Volume 010B, Page 703

[17] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Stephenson, Sarah, Volume 010B, Page 627

[18] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Stephenson, David, Volume 010B, Page 653; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index,

1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 November 2016), entry for David Stephenson, Registration district: Bootle, Inferred county: Cumberland, Volume: 10b, Page: 424

[19] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Stephenson, Thomas, Volume 010B, Page 694

[20] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/; accessed 17 November 2016) entry for Stephenson, Annie, Volume 010B, Page 711

[21] "The Long, Long Trail: The British artillery of 1914–1918," http://www.1914-1918.net/cra.htm: accessed 7 December 2014)

[22] Ibid.

[23] "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 19 January 2015), entry for Casson Stephenson

[24] "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 15 December 2014)

[25] "Pernes British Military Cemetery" *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY: accessed 13 January 2015)

[26] "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2014), entry for Casson Stephenson