

Gunner Charles Alexander Paterson©
Regimental number: 30188
"D" Battery, 156th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery

born: probably 1881– died: 28 August 1917

When Gunner Charles Alexander Paterson died, he left his wife, the former Sarah Ann Emily Simpson (nee Webb), and a 13-year-old stepson, Sidney Thomas. Charles and Sarah had married on 9 October 1916 at St Frideswide's Church in Poplar, East London, but Sarah had been married previously and had a son by her first marriage.

Sarah was the daughter of Alfred Webb, two years older than Charles and a widow.¹ In 1902 she had married Sidney Milton Simpson at the parish church in Poplar.² Sidney was a steward and it is likely that he spent some time in Australia before his marriage.³ If so, he probably returned to England in 1898.⁴ In 1911, Sarah and her son, Sydney Thomas Simpson (born in December 1903),⁵ were living at 4 Ida Street in Poplar, where Sarah was a mantle maker. She was still married at that time. However, it appears that her husband died later that year in Australia. He probably died on 11 December 1911 of injuries received when he was crushed between an engine and the headstock of a railway carriage.⁶ Sarah married Charles five years later.

Charles enlisted as a gunner in the Royal Horse Artillery and Royal Field Artillery in Stratford, London, and served with the 156th Brigade. In August 1917, the 156th Brigade was stationed near Coxyde les Bains on the Belgian coast. On the night of 24/25 August, the 19th Infantry Battalion had captured the Geleide Post, but it was recaptured by the enemy the following night. On the night of the 26/27 August, the 156th Brigade launched a gas attack on Nieport Bains sector. The following night, the 156th Brigade "withdrew from action without casualties."⁷ Yet it was probably during some of these actions that Charles was wounded. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with shell wounds to both his legs and an eye.⁸ He died two days later and was buried the same day⁹ in Adinkerke Military Cemetery (Grave Reference: B. 23).¹⁰

Adinkerke Military Cemetery is 20 kilometres east of Dunkirk, in the community of De Panne, just across the border into Belgium. There are 168 Commonwealth soldiers from the Great War buried in the cemetery.¹¹

Charles' wife, who was living at the time at 17 Sydney Buildings, Brunswick Road in Poplar, was notified of his death.¹² She also received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.¹³

Charles was the son of Charles Alexander and Mary Adams Paterson¹⁴ and was born in 1881 in Poplar.¹⁵ Both his parents had been born in Scotland—Charles in about 1847 and Mary the year before. Charles Sr. was a sailmaker¹⁶ who probably moved his family from Scotland to London sometime at the second half of the 1870s. Charles and Mary had five children—three of whom survived to 1911:¹⁷ William (born in about 1873), Margaret (born in about 1880)¹⁸ and Charles.

Charles Sr. probably died in 1887.¹⁹ In 1911, Charles and his mother were living at 1 Zetland Street in Bromley, East London, and Mary was a widow. Charles was listed as a ship's steward but was, at the time, unemployed. His mother was a seamstress with the Union Castle Steamship Company.²⁰

Charles was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²¹

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- ¹ "London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754–1921," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 June 2016), entry for Charles Alexander Paterson, Parish: St Frideswide, Poplar, Borough: Tower Hamlets, Register type: Parish register
- ² "London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754–1921," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 24 June 2016), entry for Sidney Milton Simpson, Parish: All Saints, Poplar, Borough: Tower Hamlets, Register type: Parish register
- ³ "UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890–1960," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 24 June 2016), entry for Sydney Simpson
- ⁴ "UK, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878–1960," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 24 June 2016), entry for Sidney M Simpson, Official number: 85923
- ⁵ "London, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813–1906," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 1 July 2016), entry for Sydney Thomas Simpson, Record type: Baptism, Borough: Tower Hamlets, Register type: Parish register
- ⁶ "New South Wales, Australia, Registers of Coroners' Inquests, 1821–1937," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 24 June 2016), entry for Sidney Milton [sic] Simpson
- ⁷ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920." *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 29 June 2016) Regiment or Unit: Royal Horse Artillery and Royal Field Artillery, Sub-unit: 156 Brigade Royal Field Artillery, Division: 33rd Division, Diary dates: 1915 February–1919 April, Piece description: Piece 2413/3: 156 Brigade Royal Field Artillery (1915 February–1919 April), Piece number: 2413
- ⁸ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 to 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 and 2016), Record group: 9, Series: IIC10, Volume: 4556, Record number: 352
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 3 December 2016), entry for Paterson, C.A., Service No: 30188
- ¹¹ "Adinkerke Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>; accessed 30 April 2016)
- ¹² "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 to 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, Record number: 352
- ¹³ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 January 2016), entry for Charles Alexander Paterson
- ¹⁴ "1881 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 8 May 2016), entry for Charles Paterson, Registration district: Poplar, Archive reference: RG11, Piece: 500, Folio: 145, Page: 30
- ¹⁵ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 June 2016), entry for Charles Alexander Paterson, Registration district: Poplar, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1c, Page: 652
- ¹⁶ "1881 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk) entry for Charles Paterson
- ¹⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2016), entry for Charles Alexander Paterson, Registration district: Bolton, Registration district number: 461, Sub-registration district: Poplar, Registration District Number: 22, Sub-registration district: Bromley, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 8, Piece: 1685
- ¹⁸ "1881 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk) entry for Charles Paterson
- ¹⁹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 2 July 2016), entry for Charles Paterson, Registration district: Poplar, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1c, Page: 436
- ²⁰ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk) entry for Charles Alexander Paterson
- ²¹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 June 2016), entry for Charles A. Paterson