Gunner John Harrison Whalley©
Regimental number: 103096
12th Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery

born: 1890 – died: 10 January 1919

Gunner John Harrison Whalley was born in 1890 in Blackburn, Lancashire,[1] the son of Robert Edwin and Elizabeth (nee Harrison) Whalley.[2] Both his parents were also born in Blackburn—Robert in about 1862 and Elizabeth about two years later.[3] Robert and Elizabeth married in 1884 in Blackburn and had five children—four of whom survived childhood. John had an older brother, Archibald Leaver (born in 1885)[4] and two older sisters, Elizabeth A (born in 1886)[5] and Nellie (born in 1888).[6] It is possible that Nellie had a twin sister, Rosie,[7] who died soon after birth, but no evidence has been found of her death.

John's family lived in Blackburn, where his father was a cotton spinner.[8] By 1911, John, at the age of 21, was working in a corn mill and his two older sisters were weavers.[9]

On 9 December 1915, John enlisted in the British army in Burnley, Lancashire. He was 5' 7½" tall and had previously served as a bandsman with the Blackburn Territorials.[10]

A few months after enlisting, John married Mary Anne Shaw on 16 March 1916 at St Thomas Church in Blackburn.[11] Three months later, John was mobilized. He served in the United Kingdom until 20 November 1916 when he embarked in Southampton for the Western Front. He joined the 12th Heavy Battery in the field on 23 November.

A few months after joining the Front, John was hospitalized for ten days. Then, on 29 April 1917, he had a disciplinary incident. He neglected to comply with an order and received seven days of Field Punishment No. 2, but no fine.

After the end of the war, he remained in Europe and, in January 1919, he was stationed in Germany. On 2 January 1919, he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station. His wife was notified on 8 January that he was "dangerously ill." He died two days later of influenza and pneumonia and was buried the following day in Poppelsdorfer (Communal) Cemetery (Grave 7, Plot 1, Row B) in Bonn, with the Canadian chaplain, A. D. Reid, presiding.[12] He was one of three patients to die that day at No. 1 CCCS. The CCCS war diary notes that "January has been a month of steady medical work mostly influenza with in very many cases bronco pneumonia. . . . All burials were conducted as Military Funerals with gun carriage, etc."[13]

John and his wife had probably had a son, Fred, born in 1918, but he sadly died soon after birth.[14] Mary Ann had lost her son and then, less than a year later, her husband, who died nearly two months after the end of the war.

His wife, who was living at 1 Waterloo Avenue in Blackpool, was notified of his death by the chaplain at No. 1 CCCS[15] and received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.[16] She also received his final possessions—letters, photos and photo frame, a watch, a religious book, a notebook, a purse, two rings, a razor and strap, a cap badge and three chevrons, cards, scissors and six coins.[17]

Although he was initially buried in the Poppelsdorfer Cemetery, his remains were moved to Cologne Southern Cemetery (Plot XII, Row C, Grave 16).[18] Almost 2,500 soldiers from the Great War are buried or commemorated in the Commonwealth plots at the Cologne Southern Cemetery. Commonwealth forces occupied Cologne from December 1918 and the cemetery was used by the occupying garrison. In 1922, it was decided to bring together all the graves of Commonwealth servicemen in Germany into four cemeteries, of which the Cologne Southern Cemetery was one. The graves of those buried in the Poppelsdorfer cemetery in Bonn were included. This took place over the course of the following year.[19]

John was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).[20]

John's father died in London in 1947.[21]

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[1] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/: accessed 22 November 2016) entry for Whalley, John Harrison, Volume 08E, Page 231

[2] "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for John Whalley, Registration district: Blackburn, Registration district number: 474, Sub-registration district: Blackburn South Eastern, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 21, Piece: 25114

[3] "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for John H. Whalley, Registration district: Blackburn, Sub-registration district: Blackburn Southern, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 21, Piece: 3405, Folio: 105, Page 26

[4] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/: accessed 22 November 2016) entry for Whalley, Archibald Leaver, Volume 08E, Page 393

[5] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/: accessed 22 November 2016) entry for Whalley, Elizabeth Alice, Volume 08E, Page 425

[6] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/: accessed 22 November 2016) entry for Whalley, Nellie, Volume 08E, Page 262

[7] "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/: accessed 22 November 2016) entry for Whalley, Rosie, Volume 08E, Page 262

[8] "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for John H. Whalley; "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for John H Whalley, Registration district: Blackburn, Sub-registration district: Blackburn Southern, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 14, Piece: 3912, Folio: 51, Page: 7, Household schedule number: 46; "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for John Whalley

[9] "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for John Whalley

[10] "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for John Harrison Whalley. Unless otherwise noted, all information about his military career comes from this source.

[11] "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 23 November 2016), entry for Robert Edwis [*sic*] Whalley , District: Blackburn, County: Lancashire, Volume: 8E, Page: 653

[12] "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for Whalley, J. H.

[13] "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 23 November 2014)

[14] "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 November 2016), entry for Fred Whalley, Registration district: Blackburn, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8e, Page: 362; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 November 2016), entry for Fred Whalley, Registration district: Chichester, Inferred county: Sussex, Volume: 8e, Page: 531

[15] "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 22 November 2016), entry Whalley, J. H.

[16] "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for John Harrison Whalley

[17] "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for John Harrison Whalley

[18] *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for Whallley, J. H., Service No: 103096

[19] *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 24November 2016), entry for Brussels Town Cemetery

[20] "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2016), entry for John H Whalley

[21] "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1966," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 22 November 2016), entry for Robert Edwin Whalley