Corporal Christopher Bertram Fitch©
Regimental number: 15697
7th Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment

born: 1888 – died: 12 July 1916

"At Rest"—at the suggestion of his widow, these are the words found on the Corporal C. B. Fitch's gravestone.[1]

Christopher Bertram Fitch, son of Allen Fitch and Emma Stanford, was baptized in St Edmund Parish, Northampton, England, on 12 August 1888.[2] Allen (born 1863) and Emma (born 1864) had married in the same Northampton parish on 19 September 1886, where Allen worked as a clerk.[3] Christopher's siblings included William Allen (born 1887), May Winifred (1890), Lilian Maud (1892), Albert Denny (1893) and Charles Alfred (1905).[4] In 1891, the Fitch family resided at 39 Vermont Sreet in Northampton East.[5] By 1901, they were living at 65 Lorne Road in Northampton North and Allen worked as a boot closer foreman.[6] Christopher, who was by then working as a boot sole cutter, was still at home during in 1911 when the Fitch household was at 51 Balmoral Road, Northampton.[7]

In the spring of 1915, Christopher married Lilian Mary Elizabeth Clements in Northamptonshire.[8]

At the time of his death, Christopher was serving with the 7th Battalion of the Northamptonshire Regiment. On the night of 10/11 July 1916, his unit of the Northamptonshire Regiment was involved in wire cutting along the German front line near the route de Locre, north of Bailleul, France. Flares were launched soon after the artillery began at 12:58 a.m. Some of the wire cutters along the line were then revealed by the flares. The element of surprise was now gone and eventually there were casualties.[9]

Injured during the wire-cutting operations, Corporal Fitch was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station in Bailleul, France. He died from his wounds on 12 July 1916.[10] Bailleul had become an important hospital centre for not just No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station but also No. 1 Australian and five British Army casualty clearing stations. In July 1916, the No. 1 CCCS received 2,810 admissions, of whom 70 died.[11]

Corporal Fitch was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension (Nord), section II, row E, grave 43. This cemetery contains 4,403 Commonwealth burials of the First World War, 17 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War and 154 German burials from both wars.[12]

Corporal Fitch received the Military Medal, awarded for bravery in battle.[13] He was also awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).[14]

In 1919, the soldier's effects were sent to his widow Lilian, and she received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.[15] In the spring of 1921, she married Percy T. Rixon in Northamptonshire.[16] Lilian died in Northampton in June 1967.[17]

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[1] *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 17 January 2017), entry for Fitch, C B, Service No: 15697

[2] "Northamptonshire, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1912," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 September 2016), entry for Christopher Bertram Fitch

[3] "Northamptonshire, England, Church of England Marriages, 1754–1912," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 November 2017), entry for Allen Fitch

[4] "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 September 2016), entry for Christopher Bertram Fitch, Registration district: Northampton, Registration district number: 163, Sub-registration district: All Saints, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 8, Household schedule number: 211, Piece: 8430

[5] "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 September 2016), entry for Christopher B Fitch, Registration district: Northampton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 27, Piece: 1197

[6] "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 September 2016), entry for Christopher Fitch, Registration district: Northampton, Sub-registration district: St Giles, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 09, Household schedule number: 65, Piece: 1420

[7] "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 September 2016), entry for Christopher Bertram Fitch

[8] "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 September 2016), entry for Christopher B Fitch, Registration district: Northampton, Inferred county: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 126

[9] "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 September 2016)

[10] *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 17 January 2017), entry for Fitch, C B, Service No: 15697

[11] "War Diaries – 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *Library and Archives Canada* (collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=2005082: accessed 23 August 2016)

[12] *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 17 January 2017), entry for Fitch, C B, Service No: 15697

[13] "Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord,'' *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 16 March 2017)

[14] "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 20 December 2017), entry for Christopher Bertram Fitch

[15] "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 February 2017), entry for Christopher Bertram Fitch

[16] "England & Wales, Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 September 2016), entry for Lilian M E Fitch, Registration district: Northampton, Inferred county: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 116

[17] "England & Wales, Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 September 2016), entry for Lilian M E Rixon, Registration district: Northampton, Inferred county: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 559