

Sapper John Muscott Thompson[©]

Regimental number: 533980

6th Observation Group, 4th Field Survey Company, Royal Engineers

born: 1885 – died: 26 January 1919

Sapper John Muscott Thompson was born in 1885 in Northampton, Northamptonshire,¹ the son of William and Harriet Thompson.² William and Harriet were both born in Northampton—William in about 1838 and Harriet (nee Collins) in about 1841³—and married there in 1868.⁴ They had 12 children, 9 of whom survived childhood: Charles (born in 1872),⁵ Annie (born in 1875),⁶ Rose (born in 1877),⁷ Sophia (born in 1879),⁸ Ada (born in 1881),⁹ Lilly (born in 1883),¹⁰ John, Kate (born in 1888)¹¹ and Elizabeth (born in 1890).¹² Three other children died before the age of two: Charles William (born in 1870 and died the following year),¹³ Frederick Muscott (born in 1873 and died in 1874)¹⁴ and Elizabeth Maria (who died within months of her birth in 1898).¹⁵

William was a shoe maker in Northampton.¹⁶ At the beginning of their marriage, Harriet was also working as a shoe fitter. By 1891, William was in the boot trade,¹⁷ and in 1911 the family was living at 12 Louise Road. John, as were all his siblings, was in the shoe and boot trade, working as a “boot clicker (upper cutter).”

Later that year, John married Elizabeth M. Burrard in Northampton.¹⁸ Elizabeth was probably born in about 1884 in Northampton, the daughter of William, also in the boot trade, and his wife, Elizabeth.¹⁹ John and Elizabeth probably did not have any children.

John enlisted first as a private in the Middlesex Regiment and then, at some point, transferred to the Royal Engineers.²⁰ He was serving in the 6th Observation Group of the 4th Field Survey Company when he died in 1919.

When the Armistice was signed in November 1918, the 4th Field Battalion was stationed overlooking the Scheldt River, probably near Dottignies in Belgium. The work of the observation groups had ended and the battalion prepared for a march to the Rhine, although it was not very mobile, given all its store and equipment. However, the 6th Observation Group could leave and accompany the Canadian Corps on its move to Cologne, Germany.²¹ The move was not an easy one.

The march involved heavy work for the men, as the Group accompanied the H.A. [Horse Artillery] which being all horse or M.T. [Motor Transport] drawn covered the distance in very long daily marches. The Group transport proved altogether inadequate, and much kit and a few stores had to be dumped at various places en route. Shortly after entering Germany it was possible to allocate a lorry to the Group which enabled them to keep up satisfactorily from that time onwards.²²

The group arrived in Wahn, just outside Cologne, Germany, on 18 December and went into billets in the German Observation School there. However, the march may have taken its toll on John. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, which was stationed near Bonn,²³ about a month later with influenza. He was admitted on 24 January and died two days later. He was buried on 29 January in Poppelsdorfer Freidhof Cemetery (Grave 11, Plot B) in Bonn, with the Canadian chaplain W. Fisher presiding.²⁴ 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.”²⁵

John's wife was his next of kin and was notified of his death.²⁶ She also received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.²⁷

John was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁸

© 2017 BIFHSGO

¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, John Muscott, Volume 03B, Page 66

² "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2017), entry for John Thompson, Registration district: Northampton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 22, Piece: 1196, Folio: 152, Page: 8

³ Ibid.

⁴ "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 12 January 2017), entry for William Thompson, Registration district: Northampton, Inferred county: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3B, Page: 140

⁵ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, William Charles, Volume 03B, Page 74

⁶ "GRO online index–birth–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, Annie Sophia, Volume 03B, Page 45

⁷ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, Rose Muscott, Volume 03B, Page 72

⁸ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, Sophia, Volume 03B, Page 59

⁹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, Ada, Volume 03B, Page 76

¹⁰ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, Lily, Volume 03B, Page 49

¹¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, Kate, Volume 03B, Page 51

¹² "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, Elizabeth, Volume 03B, Page 41

¹³ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, Charles William, Volume 03B, Page 84; "GRO online index–death," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, Charles William, Volume 03B, Page 33

¹⁴ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, Frederick Muscott, Volume 03B, Page 58; "GRO online index–death," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, Frederick Muscott, Volume 03B, Page 37

¹⁵ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, Elizabeth Maria, Volume 03B, Page 92; "GRO online index–death," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 23 January 2017) entry for Thompson, Elizabeth Maria, Volume 03B, Page 52

¹⁶ "1871 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 January 2017), entry for William Thompson, Registration district: Northampton, Sub-registration district: St Giles, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 22, Household schedule number: 47, Piece: 1484, Folio: 9, Page: 9

-
- ¹⁷ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2017), entry for John Thompson
- ¹⁸ "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 12 January 2017), entry for John M Thompson, Registration district: Northampton, Inferred county: Northamptonshire, Volume: 3B, Page: 225
- ¹⁹ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 24 January 2017), entry for Elizabeth Burnard, Registration district: Northampton, Sub-registration district: All Saints, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 6, Piece: 1426, Folio: 98, Page: 5, Household schedule number: 33
- ²⁰ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 January 2017), entry for John M Thompson
- ²¹ Macleod, Lieut Col M. N., "History of the Fourth Field Survey Battalion, R.E." (<http://www.defencesurveyors.org.uk/Images/Historical/WWI/4th%20Field%20Survey%20Battalion.pdf>: accessed 23 January 2017)
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ "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=FINN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 23 November 2014)
- ²⁴ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for Thompson, J. A. [*sic*]
- ²⁵ "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=FINN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 23 November 2014)
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 January 2017), entry for John Muscote [*sic*] Thompson
- ²⁸ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 January 2017), entry for John M Thompson