

**Gunner Sydney George Isden**©  
**Regimental number: 44803**  
**93rd Battery, 18th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery**

**born: about 1888 – died: 17 February 1916**

Gunner Sydney George Isden (known as George) was born Sydney George Bexhell in 1888 in Hastings, Sussex,<sup>1</sup> the illegitimate son of Annie Bexhell.<sup>2</sup> Annie was born Annie Isden, the illegitimate daughter of Sarah Isden, on 27 June 1871, in Ore, Hastings.<sup>3</sup> Although Sarah was not married at the time, Annie's father was identified as Richard Bexhall. Sometime after 1878, when Sarah married Richard Bexhall,<sup>4</sup> who had been her lodger in 1871,<sup>5</sup> Annie and the children took on the name Bexhell.<sup>6</sup>

In 1891, Annie, then a washerwoman, and her son were paupers and living as inmates in the Battle Union Workhouse in Battle, Sussex.<sup>7</sup> Two years later, Annie had a second child—a daughter, Catherine Sarah Isabel Bexhell, also born in Hastings.<sup>8</sup> She was George's half-sister.<sup>9</sup> In 1901, George and his half-sister, known as Cassie, were living with their grandparents, Sarah and Richard Bexhill on Toronto Terrace in Hastings.<sup>10</sup> There is no evidence to suggest where their mother was. However, three years later, Annie married Alfred Deacon, a labourer. They married on 26 November 1904 in the parish of St Luke's, Kingston, Surrey.<sup>11</sup> They had a daughter, Olive Nellie, born in 1906 in Kingston.<sup>12</sup> Sadly, Alfred died three years later at the age of 34.<sup>13</sup> In 1911, Annie and Olive were living with Alfred's brother John and his family, at 35 Red Lion Road in Surbiton, Surrey.<sup>14</sup>

By 1911, George had already enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery and was serving as a gunner in the 14th Battery stationed in India.<sup>15</sup> He had reverted to the name Isden—the birth name of his mother.

At the outbreak of the Great War, George was serving with the 7th Divisional Ammunition Column of the Royal Field Artillery and he joined the Western Front on 6 October 1914.<sup>16</sup> The 7th DAC was formed very early in the war and went to France in the first week of October,<sup>17</sup> so George was probably with the unit then. He probably took part in the first battle of Ypres in 1914 and other major battles in 1915—the battles of Neuve Chapelle, Aubers, Festubert, Givenchy and Loos.

George died early the following year. He was then serving with the 93rd Battery, 18th Brigade of the RFA when he was injured and admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, where he died of his wounds on 17 February 1916.<sup>18</sup>

He was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Grave Reference: Plot II, Row C, Grave 145).<sup>19</sup> Bailleul is in France, but near the Belgian border, about 15 kilometres southwest of Ypres.<sup>20</sup> It was occupied in October 1914 and became an important hospital centre not just for No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station but also for No. 1 Australian and five British Army casualty clearing stations.

The monies owing to him from the army upon his death were sent to his mother and his half-sister, Kathleen Smith. Kathleen had married Thomas R. Smith in London in 1914.<sup>21</sup>

George was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914–15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).<sup>22</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 March 2017) entry for Bexhell, Sydney George, Registration district: Hastings, Volume 2b, Page 14. There are various spellings of his surname in different documents: Bexhell, Bexhill and Bexhall.
- <sup>2</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 26 March 2017), entry for George Bexhill, Registration district: Battle, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: Battle Union Workhouse, Piece: 769, Folio: 162, Page: 4
- <sup>3</sup> "Certified copy of an entry of a birth," *General Register Office*, from "Turner Public Member Tree," *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/16189482/person/348266868/facts>: accessed 2 April 2017), entry for Annie Bexhall Isden
- <sup>4</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 4 February 2017), entry for Sarah Ann Isden, Registration district: Hastings, Inferred county: Sussex, Volume: 2b, Page: 73
- <sup>5</sup> "1871 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 4 February 2017), entry for Sarah Isden, Registration district: Hastings, Sub-registration district: Ore, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 7, Household schedule number: 359, Piece: 1027, Folio: 99, Page: 65
- <sup>6</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 26 March 2017), entry for Sarah Beatrice [sic], Registration district: Hastings, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 3, Piece: 758, Folio: 59, Page: 20
- <sup>7</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 26 March 2017), entry for George Bexhill
- <sup>8</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 March 2017) entry for Bexhell, Catherine Sarah Isabel, Registration district: Hastings, Volume 2b, Page 13
- <sup>9</sup> "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 24 March 2017), entry for George Isden. George's half-sister's name appears in various documents as Catherine, Cathleen and Cassie.
- <sup>10</sup> "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 4 February 2017), entry for George Bexhill, Registration district: Hastings, Sub-registration district: Ore, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 04, Piece: 862, Folio: 90, Page: 21, Household schedule number: 151
- <sup>11</sup> "Surrey, England, Marriages, 1754–1937," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 4 February 2017), entry for Annie Bexhell
- <sup>12</sup> "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 March 2017) entry for Deacon, Olive Nellie, Registration district: Kingston, Volume 02A, Page 481
- <sup>13</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 4 February 2017), entry for Alfred Deacon, Registration district: Kingston, Inferred county: Surrey, Volume: 2a, Page: 253
- <sup>14</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 4 February 2017), entry for Annie Deacon, Registration district: Kingston, Registration district number: 40, Sub-registration district: Surbiton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 12, Household schedule number: 71, Piece: 3547
- <sup>15</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 4 February 2017), entry for George Isden, Registration district number: 641, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: India, Piece: 34982
- <sup>16</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 17 April 2017), entry for George Isden
- <sup>17</sup> "7th Division," *The Long, Long Trail* (<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/order-of-battle-of-divisions/7th-division/>: accessed 29 March 2017)
- <sup>18</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 24 March 2017), entry for Isden, G. Some military records indicate that he died on 16 February, not 17 February.
- <sup>19</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 3 December 2017), entry for Isden, G., Service No: 44803
- <sup>20</sup> "Bailleul Community Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 17 January 2017)

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<sup>21</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 29 March 2017), entry for Cathleen S I Isden, Registration district: Edmonton, Inferred county: Middlesex, Volume: 3a, Page: 1036

<sup>22</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 17 April 2017), entry for George Isden