

**Bombardier George Herbert Stanley©**  
**Regimental Number: 29657**  
**5th Brigade Ammunition Column, Royal Field Artillery**

**born: about January 1888 – died: 22 March 1918**

George's birth was registered for the first quarter of 1888<sup>1</sup> in Grays, Essex, to William Joseph Stanley and Sarah Ann Irwin.<sup>2</sup> Regrettably, only about 30% of UK service records still exist due to a fire resulting from a 1940 air raid on the Army Records Office in Walworth, London,<sup>3</sup> and it appears that George's records were not saved. As a result, certain specifics of George's life were not obtainable.

William, who was born about 1854 in New Brompton, Kent, and Sarah, who was born about 1851 in Ratcliff, Middlesex, were married on 2 September 1873 at the parish church at St. Mary Whitechapel, Middlesex. Their fathers were both ship builders, and William was an engineer.<sup>4</sup> Together, William and Sarah had nine children<sup>5</sup>:

- Alice, who was born in 1874 in Stepney, Middlesex;<sup>6</sup>
- Sarah Frances, who was born in 1876 in Stepney;<sup>7</sup>
- Ellen Maud, who was born in 1878 in Stepney,<sup>8</sup> and who may have died in 1880;<sup>9</sup>
- William, who was born in 1880 in Stepney;<sup>10</sup>
- Florence, who was born in 1881 in Stepney;<sup>11</sup>
- Beatrice Gertrude, who was born in 1883 in Stepney,<sup>12</sup> and who may have died at the age of three;<sup>13</sup>
- Joseph William, who was born in 1885 in West Ham, Essex;<sup>14</sup>
- George Herbert; and
- Leonard Robert, who was born about 1891 in Grays, Essex. In 1911, Leonard had taken after his father and was a marine engineer apprentice performing ship repairs.<sup>15</sup>

George did not take after his father, but became a mercantile clerk for a paper manufacturer.<sup>16</sup> Before enlisting with the Royal Field Artillery, George married Louisa Ann (surname unknown) and they were living in Goodmayes, London.<sup>17</sup>

It is possible that George enlisted in December 1914, based on Louisa receiving a war gratuity of £16, 9s, 6d.<sup>18</sup> He enlisted with the 5th Brigade Ammunition Column, Royal Field Artillery and held the rank of bombardier.<sup>19</sup> The 5th Brigade was a unit of Britain's pre-war regular army, originally under the command of the 7th (Meerut) Division of the Indian Army. On 20 March 1916 when the division left France, the brigade remained and came under the command of the 3rd Canadian Division until September 1916, when it went to the 4th Canadian Division, with which it served until July 1917. At that point it became an army brigade and served various components of the British army. At the time of George's death, the brigade was part of the First Army.<sup>20</sup>

In an interesting podcast of the Imperial War Museums, former soldiers discussed what it was like being a gunner in the Great War. Some excerpts and photos from that podcast:<sup>21</sup>

There was a sergeant in charge, he was regarded as No 1 – he was generally called No 1, you see. There was the limber gunner who opened and closed the breech when you were in action, and in normal times he serviced the gun, you know, he was in charge of cleaning it

and all that sort of thing. Then there was the gun layer who of course he aimed the gun every time, and then the rest were ammunition numbers. There's supposed to be a total of eight in the crew, but of course that was in theory because very often we didn't have sufficient people on hand. . . .

Guns were located in gun pits, where they had a good field of fire but could be hidden out of the direct sight of the enemy. They were difficult to maneuver into position, particularly in waterlogged ground . . . .

They used to have to lay a platform – this was the great trouble – because the guns were very heavy and the ground was absolutely a bloody bog, we used to call it. Consequently they used to have to get tree trunks and things and make a platform. So we built for each of the four howitzers, we built a platform. You wanted – and of course you always had in normal battle – the gun in a pit, but at Ypres you very often couldn't do that because the water level was too high. So we used to make a sandbag, or double sandbag, wall around them, round the edges of the gun pit and hope that we didn't get too near or close a round.

Artillery pieces were extremely cumbersome, and were transported by horses or motorized vehicles. But guns often became stuck . . . .

One of the most important artillery jobs was counter battery work – trying to knock out the enemy guns.



Crew of a 6 inch 26 cwt howitzer moving the howitzer on to a new target, 1918. Q 11026  
Source: "Podcast 32: Gunners," *Imperial War Museums*



Hauling an 18 pounder field gun out of the mud near Zillebeke, 9 August 1917. Q 6236  
Source: "Podcast 32: Gunners," *Imperial War Museums*

George was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 15 March 1918 suffering from gastritis. Sadly, the inflammation turned fatal, and George died on 22 March at the age of 31. On 24 March 1918, he was buried at Houchin British Cemetery Row G, grave 26.<sup>22</sup> Houchin British Cemetery was opened in March 1918 when the 6th British Casualty Clearing Station came to Houchin. From April to September the German advance made Houchin unsafe for hospitals, and the cemetery was used by the 55th (West Lancashire) Division.<sup>23</sup>

George's estate was probated in London, England on 29 April 1918 and was paid to his wife Louisa,<sup>24</sup> who was his sole legatee and received his service effects and the war gratuity.<sup>25</sup> George is

remembered with a stone in the Houchin British Cemetery bearing the additional inscription, "Never shall thy memory fade."<sup>26</sup>

© 2017 BIFHSGO

---

<sup>1</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 30 May 2017), entry for George Herbert Stanley

<sup>2</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 30 May 2017), entry for Stanley, George Herbert, Service No: 29657

<sup>3</sup> "How to research a soldier," *The Long, Long Trail, The British Army in the Great War of 1914–1918* (<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/how-to-research-a-soldier/>: accessed 30 May 2017)

<sup>4</sup> "London, England, Church of England Marriages and Bans, 1754–1921," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 31 May 2017), entry for William Joseph Stanley

<sup>5</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 31 May 2017), entry for George Herbert Stanley, Registration district: West Ham, Sub-registration district: North East Ham; Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 21, Piece: 9577, Household schedule number 108

<sup>6</sup> "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 31 May 2017), entry for William J. Stanley, Registration district: Stepney, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 10a, Piece: 464, Folio: 56, Page: 20

<sup>7</sup> "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 9 August 2017) entry for Stanley, Sarah Frances, Volume 01C, Page 440

<sup>8</sup> "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 9 August 2017) entry for Stanley, Ellen Maud, Volume 01C, Page 438

<sup>9</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 9 August 2017), entry for Ellen Maud Stanley, Registration district: Stepney, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1c, Page: 296

<sup>10</sup> See Endnote 6

<sup>11</sup> "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 9 August 2017) entry for Stanley, Florence, Volume 01C, Page 448

<sup>12</sup> "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 9 August 2017) entry for Stanley, Beatrice Gertrude, Volume 01C, Page 420

<sup>13</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 9 August 2017), entry for Beatrice Gertrude Stanley, Registration district: Stepney, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1c, Page: 316

<sup>14</sup> "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 9 August 2017) entry for Stanley, Joseph William, Volume 04A, Page 382

<sup>15</sup> "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 9 August 2017) entry for Stanley, Leonard Robert, Volume 04A, Page 452

<sup>16</sup> See Endnote 5

<sup>17</sup> See Endnote 2

<sup>18</sup> "Gratuity Calculator," (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 31 May 2017) and "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 31 May 2017), entry for George Herbert Stanley

<sup>19</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 30 May 2017), entry for Stanley, George Herbert, Service No: 29657

<sup>20</sup> "Batteries and Brigades of the Royal Field Artillery," *The Long, Long Trail, The British Army in the Great War of 1914–1918* (<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/regiments-and-corps/the-royal-artillery-in-the-first-world-war/batteries-and-brigades-of-the-royal-field-artillery/>: accessed 21 April 2017)

- 
- <sup>21</sup> "Podcast 32: Gunners," *Imperial War Museums* (<http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/podcasts/voices-of-the-first-world-war/podcast-32-gunners>: accessed 31 May 2017)
- <sup>22</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 31 May 2017), entry for Stanley, G. H., regimental number 29657
- <sup>23</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 31 May 2017), entry for Stanley, George Herbert
- <sup>24</sup> "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar, 1918," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 31 May 2017), entry for George Herbert Stanley
- <sup>25</sup> "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 31 May 2017), entry for George Herbert Stanley
- <sup>26</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 31 May 2017), entry for Stanley, George Herbert