

Private George Purdy Gibson©
Regimental number: 203444
1st/4th Battalion, South Lancashire Regiment

born: 1887 - died: 2 June 1918

Private George Purdy Gibson was born in 1887 in Hexham, Northumberland,¹ the son of James and Elizabeth Gibson.² His father (born in about 1843 in Whalton, Northumberland)³ and his mother, the former Elizabeth Batho Ikin (born in 1859 in Bedlington, Northumberland),⁴ were married in 1878 in Newcastle upon Tyne, Northumberland.⁵ They had eight children: Mary Ann (born in 1879),⁶ James (born in 1882),⁷ John William (born in 1884),⁸ Jane Elizabeth (born in 1885),⁹ George, Sarah Isabella (born in 1892),¹⁰ Henry (born in 1894)¹¹ and Emma Amelia (born in 1896).¹²

George's father James spent his whole career as a mason, builder and contractor, working in various locations around Northumberland and Durham. In 1881, James was living in Thockrington, Northumberland, with his wife and two young children. His brother-in-law, John Ikin, also a mason, was living with the family.¹³ Ten years later, James and Elizabeth were living at 13 High Quay in Blyth, Northumberland. The couple now had five children.¹⁴ By 1901, the family was at St Mary's Terrace, Ryton, near Gateshead, Durham and two of James' sons had joined him in the building industry—James Jr. was a building manager and John was a bricklayer.¹⁵ By 1911, James had retired as a house builder, but his son George was now a bricklayer working for a house builder and the family was living at 29 Beaconsfield Avenue in Low Fill, Gateshead.¹⁶

It appears that George married in about 1909. He and his wife, also Elizabeth, were living with his parents in 1911. However, no evidence was found of his marriage.

George enlisted in the British army in Chatham, Kent,¹⁷ in about May 1916.¹⁸ At first, he served with the Royal Engineers (Regimental number: 184660) but, at some point, joined the South Lancashire Regiment.

The 4th Battalion of the South Lancashire Regiment was part of the Territorial Force, initially set up as a home defence force for service during wartime.¹⁹ Soldiers had to serve anywhere in the United Kingdom, but could not be compelled to serve outside the country. They could, however, volunteer.



Soldiers from the 1/4th South Lancashire Regiment rescuing two British tanks from the mud of the Somme battlefield
Source: "The Regiments in the Great War 1914–1918," *The Duke of Lancashire's Regiment Lancashire Infantry Museum*, Courtesy of the Lancashire Infantry Museum, Preston

Units from the Territorial Force were used to bolster the ranks of the original British Expeditionary Force. The 4th Battalion, in France since early 1915, saw action in major battles, such as the second battle of Ypres and the battles of Bellewaarde, Guillemont and Givenchy.²⁰

It is not known how many of these battles George would have seen. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 24 May 1918 with a compound fracture of his skull. In spite of his injuries, he

survived over a week, only succumbing to his wounds on 2 June. He was buried the same day in Pernes Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row E, Grave 32) with the Canadian chaplain J. K. Tibbits presiding.²¹

The Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCS came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.²² In May 1918, nearly 4,000 soldiers were admitted to No. 1 CCCS.²³

The chaplain indicated that his mother, Mrs E. Gibson, who was shown as living at 23 Ivy Road, Sturchley, Birmingham, was his next of kin and was notified of his death.²⁴ However, this may have been his wife, Elizabeth. No evidence was found to confirm who was living at that address in Birmingham.

His father had the following inscription put on George's gravestone:

HE DIED TO SAVE OTHERS
HIMSELF HE COULD NOT SAVE²⁵

George was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁶

© 2017 BIFHSGO

¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 October 2017), entry for George Purdy Gibson, Registration district: Hexham, Inferred county: Northumberland, Volume: 10b, Page: 384

² "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2017), entry for George Gibson, Registration district: Tynemouth, Sub-registration district: Blyth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 1, Piece: 4237, Folio: 22

³ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 October 2017), entry for James Gibson, Registration district: Bellingham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 6, Piece: Bellingham, Folio: 52, Page: 1

⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 October 2017), entry for Elizabeth Baths [sic] Ikim, Registration district: Morpeth, Inferred county: Northumberland, Volume: 10b, Page: 261

⁵ "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2005," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2017), entry for James Gibson, District: Newcastle upon Tyne, County: Northumberland, Volume: 10B, Page: 154

⁶ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 30 October 2017) entry for Gibson, Mary Ann, Registration district: Morpeth, Volume 10B, Page 332

⁷ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 30 October 2017) entry for Gibson, James, Registration district: Bellingham Union, Volume 10B, Page 306

⁸ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 30 October 2017) entry for Gibson, John William, Registration district: Morpeth, Volume 10B, Page 352

⁹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 30 October 2017) entry for Gibson, Jane Elizabeth, Registration district: Hexham, Volume 10B, Page 316

¹⁰ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 30 October 2017) entry for Gibson, Sarah Isabella, Registration district: Tynemouth, Volume 10B, Page 293

¹¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 30 October 2017) entry for Gibson, Henry, Registration district: Tynemouth, Volume 10B, Page 280

-
- ¹² "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 30 October 2017) entry for Gibson, Emma Amelia, Registration district: Tynemouth, Volume 10B, Page 295
- ¹³ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 October 2017), entry for James Gibson
- ¹⁴ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2017), entry for George Gibson
- ¹⁵ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2017), entry for George Gibson, Registration district: Gateshead, Sub-registration district: Winlaton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 16, Piece: 4765, Folio: 44, Page: 9, Household schedule number: 55
- ¹⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 October 2017), entry for George Gibson, Registration district: Gateshead, Registration district number: 557, Sub-registration district: Gateshead, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 80, Piece: 30490
- ¹⁷ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 October 2017), entry for George Purdy Gibson
- ¹⁸ Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratiuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 October 2017), entry for George A Gibson
- ¹⁹ "Territorial Force," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_Force: accessed 31 October 2017)
- ²⁰ "The Regiments in the Great War 1914–1918," *The Duke of Lancashire's Regiment Lancashire Infantry Museum* (<http://www.lancashireinfantrymuseum.org.uk/the-regiments-in-the-great-war-1914-18-3/>: accessed 31 October 2017)
- ²¹ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 30 August 2017), entry for Gibson, G
- ²² "Pernes British Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 13 January 2015)
- 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=FIND&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 15 December 2014)
- ²⁴ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 30 August 2017), entry for Gibson, G
- ²⁵ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 3 December 2017), entry for Gibson, George Purdy, Service No: 203444
- ²⁶ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 October 2017), entry for George P Gibson