

Sergeant George Henry Watson[©]

Regimental number: 240341

1st/5th Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry

born: 1881–died: 21 July 1917

Sergeant George Henry Watson was born in 1881¹ in Balby, near Doncaster, Yorkshire, the son of William John and Mary Ann Watson.² His father was born in about 1856 in Warmsworth, Yorkshire, and his mother, the former Mary Ann Greenfield, about the same year in Balby. His parents were married on 22 July 1878 at the parish church in Balby with Hexthorpe³ and had seven children: Thomas Arthur (born in 1879),⁴ George, Lillie (born in 1884),⁵ Ernest (born in 1887),⁶ Herbert (born in 1889),⁷ Horace (born in 1891)⁸ and Edith (born in 1894).⁹

In 1881, his parents and their eldest son were living on St John's Road in Balby with Hexthorpe, where William was a cabinet maker.¹⁰ George was born later that year and, in 1891, the family had moved to 4 Back Lane in Balby.¹¹ Ten years later they were still at the same address.¹² George, age 19, was now a carriage painter with the railway. The same year, he married Sarah Ellen Hewick near Doncaster.¹³ Sarah was born in about 1879 in Doncaster, the daughter of John and Mary Hewick.¹⁴ George and Sarah had five children—two sons and three daughters: George (born in 1901),¹⁵ Mabel (born in 1905),¹⁶ Kathleen (born in 1907)¹⁷ Frederick (born in 1909)¹⁸ and Flora (born on 14 March 1917).¹⁹

In 1911, George and his young family were living at 44 King George Road in Balby, where George was a house painter.²⁰ Sarah's mother Mary was living with the family. George's parents and his four youngest siblings were living at 70 Albany Road in Balby.²¹

In the first month of the war,²² George enlisted in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in Doncaster.²³ The 5th Battalion, KOYLI was mobilized at the outbreak of the war in August 1914 in Doncaster, Yorkshire. The battalion left from Folkestone to go to Boulogne on 12 April 1915 and was mostly stationed near Estaires in northern France. George probably went with them, because his service in France began on 13 April 1915.²⁴ The battalion took part in the Battle of Aubers Ridge in May 1915 and the battles of the Somme in the second half of 1916.²⁵

On 19 July 1917, George was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station—he was unconscious.²⁶ According to the journals of the No. 1 CCCS chaplains, he died two days later, at the age of 37, and was buried in Adinkerke, probably at the Adinkerke Military Cemetery (Grave 28). However, the Commonwealth War Grave Commission records indicate that he was buried in the Adinkerke Churchyard Extension (Grave 840).²⁷ Both cemeteries are located just under a kilometre apart in Adinkerke, near Veurne, Belgium—across the border from Dunkirk, France.

Commonwealth troops held the Front from the Belgian coast inland for about 70 kilometres from June to November 1917. No. 1 CCCS was at Adinkerke for a short time in June.²⁸ The Adinkerke Military Cemetery has 168 Commonwealth Great War graves and the Adinkerke Churchyard Extension has 67.²⁹

His wife, who was living at 26 St John's Road in Balby, was notified of her husband's death³⁰ and received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.³¹ As his daughter Flora was born just four months before his death, it is likely that he never saw his last child. George's wife was left a widow with five children under the age of 16.

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).³²

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- ¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 14 April 2017) entry for Watson, George Henry, Registration district: Doncaster, Volume 09C, Page 685
- ² "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for George H Watson, Registration district: Doncaster, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 13, Piece: 3859, Folio: 52, Page: 17
- ³ "Yorkshire Marriages," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for William John Watson, County: Yorkshire (West Riding), Archive: Doncaster Archives, Archive reference: P57-1-B1, Page: 89
- ⁴ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 14 April 2017) entry for Watson, Thomas Arthur, Registration district: Doncaster in the Counties Of York And Nottingham, Volume 09C, Page 673
- ⁵ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 14 April 2017) entry for Watson, Lillie, Registration district: Doncaster, Volume 09C, Page 724
- ⁶ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 14 April 2017) entry for Watson, Ernest, Registration district: Doncaster, Volume 09C, Page 658
- ⁷ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 14 April 2017) entry for Watson, Herbert, Registration district: Doncaster, Volume 09C, Page 658
- ⁸ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 14 April 2017) entry for Watson, Horace, Registration district: Doncaster, Volume 09C, Page 799
- ⁹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 14 April 2017) entry for Watson, Edith Registration district: Doncaster, Volume 09C, Page 710
- ¹⁰ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for William J. Watson, Registration district: Doncaster, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 13, Piece: 4686, Folio: 79, Page: 33
- ¹¹ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for George H Watson
- ¹² "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for George H Watson, Registration district: Doncaster, Sub-registration district: Tickhill, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 09, Piece: 4404, Folio: 68, Page: 52, Household schedule number: 320
- ¹³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for George Henry Watson, Registration district: Doncaster, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9c, Page: 1432
- ¹⁴ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 April 2017), entry for Sarah Ellen Hewick, Registration district: Doncaster, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 5, Piece: 3862, Folio: 110, Page: 76
- ¹⁵ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 18 April 2017) entry for Watson, George, Registration district: Doncaster, Volume 09C, Page 831
- ¹⁶ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 18 April 2017) entry for Watson, Mabel, Registration district: Doncaster, Volume 09C, Page 877
- ¹⁷ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 18 April 2017) entry for Watson, Kathleen, Registration district: Doncaster, Volume 09C, Page 877
- ¹⁸ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 18 April 2017) entry for Watson, Frederick, Registration district: Doncaster, Volume 09C, Page 893
- ¹⁹ Information from Flora's son, Graham Bates
- ²⁰ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for George Henry Watson, Registration district: Doncaster, Registration district number: 512, Sub-registration district: Tickhill, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 11, Piece: 28150
- ²¹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 April 2017), entry for W J Watson, Registration district: Doncaster, Registration district number: 512, Sub-registration district: Tickhill, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 11, Piece: 28150

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- ²² Based on “War Gratuity Calculator” (<https://wargratitude.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 14 April 2017), entry for George Henry Watson
- ²³ “UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for George Henry Watson
- ²⁴ “British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for George H Watson
- ²⁵ “Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 5th Btn. during the Great War,” *The Wartime Memories Project* (<http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/alliedarmy-view.php?pid=661>: accessed 6 April 2017)
- ²⁶ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for Watson, G. H.
- ²⁷ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for Watson, G.H., Service No: 240341
- ²⁸ “Adinkerke Military Cemetery,” *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 7 April 2017)
- ²⁹ “Adinkerke Churchyard Extension,” CWGC <http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 18 April 2017
- ³⁰ “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for Watson, G. H.
- ³¹ “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for George Henry Watson
- ³² “British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 April 2017), entry for George H Watson