

## Private William John Mussen©

Regimental number: 402786

18th Battalion, Canadian Infantry

born: 25 May 1889–died: 19 March 1916

William John Mussen was born on 25 May 1889 in Banbridge, County Down, Ireland,<sup>1</sup> the son of Edward and Margaret (née Vint) Mussen.<sup>2,3</sup> William had four brothers: James, born in 1886,<sup>4</sup> David, born in 1890,<sup>5</sup> Edward, born in 1892,<sup>6</sup> and Joseph, born in 1894.<sup>7</sup> In 1895 John's father Edward died in County Westmeath<sup>8</sup> and the widowed Margaret<sup>9</sup> returned to live in Ballymoney, Banbridge,<sup>10</sup> where she raised her children alone. She completed the 1901 Census of Ireland,<sup>11</sup> and it should be noted that, due to bad handwriting by the census taker, William's brother James was mis-recorded and labelled with the name Fanny.<sup>12</sup>

By 1911, Margaret had moved her family to Belfast, Ireland, where in the census she reports herself as living with three of her sons, William, Edward and Joseph, along with two lodgers, one a 22-year-old and the other aged 4, on Cupar Street in Shankhill Parish. As head of the household, Margaret also reported that one of her five children was deceased and that her sons were employed as flax mill workers while her occupation was given as housekeeping.<sup>13</sup> Her son James had died in 1903, when he was 17 years old.<sup>14</sup>

Other records from that same period show that Margaret's sons David and William both emigrated on 5 March 1910 via the *SS Empress of Britain* with a Canadian destination.<sup>15</sup> They left from Liverpool, England, and after his arrival in Canada, William and David planned to work as farm labourers in Brantford, Ontario.<sup>16</sup> At some point in the following year David and William appear to have returned home to Ireland, as they both are shown returning to Canada via Londonderry and New York on the *SS Cameronia* in December 1911.<sup>17</sup> That is likely why William was listed in his mother's census return in 1911.<sup>18</sup> A later US border crossing document shows that William and David also had family in Ontario: an uncle, Joseph Mussen, living in Bracebridge and an aunt, Mrs. John Gordon, in Guelph.<sup>19</sup>

Both David and William likely intended to settle in Canada and better their circumstances. Unfortunately, life had other plans for them, and when the Great War began, both young men enlisted: William with the Canadian Expeditionary Force<sup>20</sup> and David with the Royal Irish Rifles.<sup>21</sup>

William was 26 when he joined the Canadian Infantry in Guelph, Ontario, on 2 February 1915.<sup>22</sup> He was a fine-looking young man, 5 feet 7 inches tall, with a ruddy complexion, blue eyes and black hair. He was working as a blacksmith's helper in Guelph, Ontario, was single and attended the Church of England.<sup>23</sup> A few months after William enlisted, David returned to Ireland to sign up with the Royal Irish Rifles. He arrived in Liverpool on the *SS Arabic* on 2 July 1915.<sup>24</sup>



Source: *Belfast Telegraph*, British Newspaper Archive, provided by the Shankhill Area Social History, S.A.S.H. Group. Used with permission.

The Canadian Record Office reports that Private William J. Mussen, Canadian Force, was mortally wounded in the abdomen on 19th March, death taking place in a Canadian clearing station in a few hours. Deceased had been in Canada—where many of his relatives reside—for a number of years. He was 28 years of age, and a son of Mrs. Mussen, 145, Cupar Street, Belfast.

Source: *Rank & File Casualties, Belfast News Letter, British Newspaper Archives, Tuesday April 11, 1916, Page 8,*

1915 with a sore throat, recovered quickly and by January 1916 was deployed to France.<sup>28</sup> He arrived in the field on 20 January 1916 and was killed just two months later.<sup>29</sup>

MUSSEN—In loving memory of my dear son, Pte. William John Mussen, Canadian Forces, killed in France on the 19th of March, 1916.  
For ever with the Lord.  
Ever remembered by his loving Mother,  
MARGARET MUSSEN,  
Lenaderg, Banbridge, Co. Down.

MUSSEN—In loving memory of my dear brother, Private William John Mussen, Canadian Forces, killed in France on the 19th March, 1916.  
Safe in the arms of Jesus.  
Ever remembered by his loving Brother and Sister-in-law,  
JOSEPH AND LIZZIE MUSSEN.  
Also his two little Nephews,  
ABRAHAM AND WILLIAM JOHN MUSSEN,  
Lenaderg, Banbridge, Co. Down.

MUSSEN—In loving memory of my dear brother, Private William John Mussen, Canadian Forces, killed in action on 19th March, 1916.  
Gone, but not forgotten.  
Ever remembered by his loving Brother and Sister-in-law,  
EDWARD AND LIZZIE MUSSEN.  
Also his little Niece, MAGGIE MUSSEN,  
48 Hanover Street.

Source: unattributed newspaper clipping provided by the Shankhill Area Social History, S.A.S.H. Group. Used with permission.

After enlisting, William was attached to the 34th Battalion; he then transferred to the 9th Battalion of the Canadian Infantry.<sup>25</sup> He trained in Canada from his enlistment until he sailed from Halifax in August 1915.<sup>26</sup> On arrival in England on 26 August 1915, he was taken on strength in the 18th Battalion, Canadian Infantry, at the Moore Banks Barracks for additional training before deployment to the field.<sup>27</sup> While there, William was admitted to the Moore Barracks Hospital in November

**OUR HEROES— IN MEMORIAM**

MUSSEN—In loving memory of my dear son, Private William John Mussen, Canadian Forces, killed in action on the 19th March, 1916.  
'Tis sweet to know we'll meet again,  
Where parting is no more,  
And that the one we dearly loved  
Has only gone before.  
Ever remembered by his loving Mother and Brothers,  
MARGARET MUSSEN,  
Lisnafiffy, Lenaderg, Banbridge, Co. Down.

MUSSEN—In loving memory of our dear brother, Private William John Mussen, Canadian Forces, killed in action on the 19th March, 1916.  
Although your hands we cannot clasp,  
Your face we cannot see,  
Just let this little token tell  
We still remember thee.  
Ever remembered by his loving Brother and Sister-in-law,  
JOSEPH AND LIZZIE MUSSEN.  
Also his two little Nephews Abraham and William John,  
Lisnafiffy, Lenaderg, Banbridge, Co. Down.

MUSSEN—In loving memory of our dear brother, Private William John Mussen, Canadian Forces, killed in action on the 19th March, 1916.  
This world may change from year to year,  
Friends from day to day,  
But never will the one we loved  
From memory pass away.  
Ever remembered by his loving Brother and Sister-in-law,  
DAVID AND ELIZABETH MUSSEN,  
34 Creeksmouth, Barking, Essex, England.  
English papers please copy.

MUSSEN—In loving memory of my dear brother, Private William Mussen, Canadian Force, killed on active service on 19th March, 1916.  
His happy face and cheery ways  
Are pleasant to recall;  
He had a kindly word for each,  
He was loved and is missed by all.  
Ever remembered by his loving Brother and Sister-in-law. Also his little Niece,  
MARGARET MUSSEN,  
48 Hanover Street.

Source: unattributed newspaper clipping provided by the Shankhill Area Social History, S.A.S.H. Group. Used with permission.

On 19 March 1916 William was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station suffering from a fatal gunshot wound to the abdomen.<sup>30</sup> He died several hours later.<sup>31</sup>

Private William John Mussen was laid to rest that same day in the Bailleuil Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, Plot II, Row B, Grave 2.<sup>32</sup> William's mother received his scroll and plaque and Memorial Cross.<sup>33</sup> William was one of approximately 1500 casualties of WWI who came from the Shankill Road district of Belfast. Over 5000 soldiers marched to war from this parish of Ireland and by the end of the war many families in the area were bereft of loved ones.<sup>34</sup>

William is remembered in Ireland's Memorial Records of 1914–1918 on page 294<sup>35</sup> and his name is memorialized on the Guelph, Ontario Cenotaph.<sup>36</sup> He is one of many who have a street named after him in Guelph to recognize his sacrifice for his adopted city and country.<sup>37</sup>

William was survived by his mother Margaret Vint Mussen; his brother and sister-in-law Joseph and Lizzie Mussen and their two sons, Abraham and William John; his brother and sister-in-law Edward and Lizzie Mussen and their daughter, Maggie; and his brother and sister-in-law David and Elizabeth Mussen.

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Special mention is made of John Dougan who assisted in compiling some of this information, particularly the newspaper clippings and the photograph. John is a member of Shankill Area Social History, S.A.S.H group, based on the Shankill Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland and is researching, photographing and compiling information concerning Irish Service Men and Women in the Great War. The group has a Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/Shankill-Area-Social-History-SASH-Group-240223979375644/?ref=settings>

<sup>1</sup> "Ireland, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1864-1958," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 29 March 2017), entry for Margaret Vint& Edward Mussen, Marriage Year:1885, Marriage Place: Banbridge, Ireland, Vol: 1, Page:157

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "Ireland, Civil Registration Births, 1845-1958," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 27 May 2017), entry for William John Mussen, Birth Year:1889, Birth Place: Banbridge, Ireland, Vol:1, Page: 156

<sup>4</sup> "Ireland, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1864-1958," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 29 March 2017), entry for Margaret Vint& Edward Mussen, Marriage Year:1885, Marriage Place: Banbridge, Ireland

<sup>5</sup> "Ireland, Civil Registration Births, 1845-1958," *Findmypast* ([findmypast.com](https://www.findmypast.com): accessed 15 July 2019), entry for James Mussen, Birth Year:1886, Birth Place: Newry, County: Armagh, Down, Ireland, Vol: 1, Page: 740

<sup>6</sup> "Web: Ireland, Census, 1901," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 27 May 2017), entry for Edward Mussen, Townland:Ballymoney No. 2, District: Banbridge Rural, County Down, Ireland & "Ireland, Civil Registration Births, 1845-1958," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 8 August 2019), entry for Edward Mussen, Birth Year:1892, Birth Place: Delvin, Ireland, Vol: 3, Page: 129

<sup>7</sup> "Web: Ireland, Census, 1901," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 27 May 2017), entry for Joseph Mussen, Townland:Ballymoney No. 2, District: Banbridge Rural, County Down, Ireland & "Ireland, Civil Registration Births, 1845-1958," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 8 August 2019), entry for Joseph Mussen, Birth Year:1894, Birth Place: Delvin, Ireland, Vol: 3, Page: 119

<sup>8</sup> "Ireland, Birth, Marriage & Death Parish Registers, 1864-1958," *Findmypast* ([findmypast.com](https://www.findmypast.com): accessed 27 May 2017), entry for Edward Mussen, Death Year:1895, Death Place: Westmeath, Ireland, Vol: 3, Page: 84

<sup>9</sup> "Web: Ireland, Census, 1901," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 27 May 2017), entry for William John Mussen, Townland:Ballymoney No. 2, District: Banbridge Rural, County Down, Ireland

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>12</sup> "Web: Ireland, Census, 1901," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 27 May 2017), entry for William John Mussen, Townland:Ballymoney No. 2, District: Banbridge Rural, County Down, Ireland
- <sup>13</sup> "Web" Ireland. Census. 1911," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 27 May 2017), entry for Margaret Mussen, Townland/Street: Cupar Street, District: Falls, County Antrim, Ireland
- <sup>14</sup> "Ireland, Birth, Marriage & Death Parish Registers, 1864-1958," *Findmypast* ([findmypast.com](https://www.findmypast.com): accessed 27 May 2017), entry for James Mussen, Death Year:1903, Death Place: Lurgan, County: Antrim, Armagh, Down, Vol: 1, Page: 505
- <sup>15</sup> "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 26 May 2017), entry for David & William Mussen, Date of Arrival: 5 March 1910, Vessel: Empress of Britain, Port of Arrival: St. John, New Brunswick, Canada
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> "UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890-1960," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 3 August 2019), entry for David & William Mussen, Departure Date: 2 December 1911, Vessel: Cameronia, Destination Port: New York, USA
- <sup>18</sup> "Web" Ireland. Census. 1911," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 27 May 2017), entry for Margaret Mussen
- <sup>19</sup> "U.S., Border Crossings from Canada to U.S., 1895-1960 ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 3 August 2019), entry for David Mussen, Arrival Date: 27 November 1914, Port of Arrival: Niagara Falls, New York, USA
- <sup>20</sup> "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 - CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>: accessed 9 May 2017) entry for William John Mussen, Regimental Number: 402796
- <sup>21</sup> "British Army Medal Index Cards, 1914-192," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 11 July 2019), entry for David Mussen, Rank: Private, Service Number: 19/262, Regiment:Royal Irish Rifles
- <sup>22</sup> "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 - CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>: accessed 9 May 2017) entry for William John Mussen, Regimental Number: 402796, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 6548-9
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> "UK, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 3 August 2019), entry for David Mussen, Arrival Date: 2 July 1915, Vessel: Arabic, Port of Arrival: Liverpool, England
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 9 May 2017), entry for W.J. Mussen, Regimental Number: 402796
- <sup>31</sup> "Belfast News Letter," *British Newspaper Archive* (<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>: accessed 9 May 1917) entry for William J. Mussen, Belfast News Letter, Dated: Tuesday, April 11, 1916, Page 8
- <sup>32</sup> "Canada, War Graves Registers (Circumstances of Casualty), 1914-1948," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 9 May 2017), entry for William John Mussen, Regimental Number: 402796, Unit: 18th Battalion, Canadian Infantry
- <sup>33</sup> "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 - CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>: accessed 9 May 2017) entry for William John Mussen, Regimental Number: 402796
- <sup>34</sup> "Shankill Road Soldiers & Casualties, World War I," *John Dougan, Shankill Area Social History, S.A.S.H group* (<https://www.facebook.com/Shankill-Area-Social-History-SASH-Group-240223979375644/?ref=settings>: provided 17 July 2019) information provided from their Great War Project
- <sup>35</sup> "Ireland, Casualties of World War 1, 1914-1922," *Ancestry* ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com): accessed 3 August 2019) entry for William J. Mussen, Death Date: 19 March 1916, Ireland's Memorial Records, volume 6, page 294
- <sup>36</sup> "The Guelph Cenotaph: Names of the fallen from the First World War (1914-1918) *GuelphMercuryTribune.com* (<https://www.guelphmercury.com/news-story/4597823-the-guelph-cenotaph-names-of-the-fallen-from-the-first-world-war-1914-1918/>: accessed 7 July 2019), Newspaper Article 25 June 2014

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<sup>37</sup> Newspaper Article - 2012 "Street-naming Program Honours Guelph's war deadGuelph Mercury," *GuelphMercuryTribune.com* ([www.guelphmercury.com/news-story/2788329-street-naming-program-honours-guelph-s-war-dead/](http://www.guelphmercury.com/news-story/2788329-street-naming-program-honours-guelph-s-war-dead/)): accessed 7 July 2019) Newspaper Article - 10 November 2012