

Private William Stephen Lewis[©]
Regimental number: 2262
1/8th Battalion Durham Light Infantry

born: 1892 - died: 1916

William Stephen Lewis was born on 28 October 1892 in Houghton le Spring, Durham, the son of John and Mary Lewis,¹ née Preston, who were married just two months earlier.² John was a coalmine hewer,³ working at the coalface.

William was the eldest of 10 children, of whom 8 were still living in 1911.⁴ In that year he was living with his parents and siblings, and working in a coal mine, as a coal putter below ground,⁵ pushing mine wagons full of coal to the passage where a horse or mechanized tram could haul them away.⁶

Two years later, in 1913, William got married to Benniess Inglis Hill,⁷ the daughter of John Hill, an engine fitter in the shipbuilding industry.⁸ They had two children, William George Harold, born on 14 April 1914,⁹ and Benniess I. W., born on 21 September 1915.¹⁰

William enlisted at the start of the First World War, in August 1914, according to the War Gratuity calculator.¹¹ He was mobilized to France on 30 October 1915 with the Durham Light Infantry,¹² disembarking with the 1/8th Battalion (Territorial Force).¹³ The battalion was stationed in the Houplines trenches outside Armenieres, near the Belgian border.¹⁴

It was just 8 months later, in July 1916, that Private Lewis lost his life. The battalion was now just North of the Belgian border, near Ridgwood.¹⁵ On July 17 the battalion was in Divisional Reserve, behind the front lines, with soldiers involved in drill and bayonet fighting, with no enemy action reported.¹⁶ Perhaps there was a training accident, as Private Lewis was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station at Bailleul where he died of his wounds.¹⁷ He was buried the same day in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, Reference II. E. 10.¹⁸ The inscription on his headstone reads

“At Rest”

The cemetery lies in the east end of the town of Bailleul, in the region of Nord, and contains the remains of 4344 soldiers from the two world wars.

Private Lewis received the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) for his service.¹⁹ He also received the 1914-15 Star.²⁰

William's brother, Joseph Daniel Alexander Lewis, also served in the Durham Light Infantry, in the Labour Corps,²¹ even though he was only 15 at the start of the war.²² He was discharged in September 1918 with a disability pension, due to a gunshot wound to his left leg.²³ He subsequently married Ruth Short in October 1919,²⁴ and lived until 1969.²⁵

William's only other brother, Percival, born in 1910,²⁶ was too young to serve in WW1.

William's son, William George Harold, married in 1938,²⁷ and in 1939 was living in London as an American bartender (hotel), cocktail shaker unemployed, with an infant son John.²⁸

William's daughter, Benniess, married twice, first in 1937, age 21, to Cyril Munday,²⁹ and subsequently in 1954, age 39, to Alfred Clark.³⁰ She died in 1989, age 73.³¹

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¹ "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538–1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for William Stephen Lewis, FHL film number: 1885559, Reference ID: item 4, page 20

² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for John Oroens (*sic*) L Lewis, Registration district: Houghton le Spring, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 601

³ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for John Lewis, Registration district: Houghton le Spring, Registration district number: 553, Sub-registration district: Houghton le Spring, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 01, Piece: 30052

⁴ *Ibid.*, entry for William Stephen Lewis.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ "Mining Occupations", *Durham Mining Museum* (<http://dmm.org.uk/educate/mineocc.htm>: accessed 2 March 2020)

⁷ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for William S Lewis, Registration district: South Shields, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 1395

⁸ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for John Hill, Registration district: South Shields, Registration district number: 556, Sub-registration district: Jarrow, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 33, Piece: 30381

⁹ "1939 Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for William G H Lewis, Schedule number: 143, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration district: AKFD, Registration district: 26-1

¹⁰ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for Benniess Inglis W Clark, Registration district: Jarrow, Inferred county: Tyne and Wear, Volume: 2, Page: 1321

¹¹ Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017)

¹² "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for William Lewis

¹³ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for William Lewis

¹⁴ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 2 March 2020), entry for Durham Light Infantry, Sub-unit: 1/8th Battalion, Piece description: Piece 2841/1-6, page 159

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, page 412

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, page 415

¹⁷ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for Lewis W.S.

¹⁸ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 5 March 2020), entry for Lewis, W. Service No: 2262

¹⁹ "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for William Lewis

²⁰ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for William Lewis

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- ²¹ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for Joseph D A Lewis
- ²² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for Daniel Alexander Lewis, Registration district: West Ham, Inferred county: Essex, Volume: 4a, Page: 1638
- ²³ "UK WW1 Pension Ledgers and Index Cards, 1914-1923", *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 5 March 2020), entry for Jos D.A. Lewis
- ²⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 5 March 2020), entry for Joseph D A Lewis, Registration district: Durham, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 1029
- ²⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for Joseph Daniel A Lewis, Registration district: Aylesbury, Inferred county: Buckinghamshire, Volume: 6a, Page: 496/s
- ²⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for Percival Lewis, Registration district: Chester le Street, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 632
- ²⁷ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 5 March 2020), entry for William G H Lewis, Registration district: Deptford, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 2501
- ²⁸ "1939 Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for William G H Lewis, Schedule number: 143, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration district: AKFD, Registration district: 26-1
- ²⁹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 5 March 2020), entry for Benniess I W Lewis, Registration district: Westminster, Inferred county: Middlesex, Volume: 1a, Page: 1144
- ³⁰ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 5 March 2020), entry for Benniess I W Munday, Registration district: Durham North Eastern, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 1a, Page: 882
- ³¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 28 February 2020), entry for Benniess Inglis W Clark, Registration district: Jarrow, Inferred county: Tyne and Wear, Volume: 2, Page: 1321