

Private James Johnston[©]
Regimental number: 32410
1st Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers

born: 1885 – died: 1918

James Johnston was born in Glasgow in 1885, the eldest child of James and Mary Cordelia Johnston.¹ James senior was a master house painter,² and in 1911 son James was following in his father's footsteps as a house painter.³

On 1 March 1917, James Jr. enlisted in the Royal Scots Fusiliers in Glasgow,⁴ aged 31 years and 10 months. He was initially posted to the 3rd Battalion,⁵ but on 29 May 1917 he was assigned to the 1st Battalion, and the following day he was in France.⁶ The 1st Battalion was stationed at this time near Arras⁷ where it had been heavily involved in the Battle of Arras in April 1917.⁸

Ten months later, in April 1918, the battalion was still in the Arras area, at Houchin.⁹ From April 11–14 the battalion was heavily involved in operations north of Bethune and came under severe attack.¹⁰ Casualties were high, with 8 killed and 338 wounded and missing.¹¹

One of these casualties was Private James Johnston, who suffered gunshot wounds to the back on April 12, and was treated at 26 General Hospital in Etaples.¹² He rejoined his battalion on 21 May 1918. Less than three weeks later, on 9 June 1918, enemy artillery scored a direct hit on A Company Headquarters, killing one officer and wounding another officer and 11 Other Ranks.¹³ Private Johnston was one of these; he was admitted with severe wounds to the head to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station at nearby Pernes.¹⁴ He lingered there until he died on 20 June and was buried the same day at Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 5, Row B, Grave No. 25).¹⁵ The cemetery lies one kilometre west of Pernes-en-Artois, in the region of Pas de Calais, and contains the remains of 1096 soldiers from the two world wars. The inscription on his tombstone reads

A LOVING BROTHER TRUE AND KIND A BEAUTIFUL MEMORY LEFT BEHIND¹⁶

Private James Johnston received the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918).¹⁷

James had two younger brothers, Alfred (born 1887) and Charles (born 1894).¹⁸ There is no evidence that either served in the First World War. He also had a younger sister, Cordelia (born 1889),¹⁹ and she took over the family painting business together with brother Charles and a John Robertson.²⁰

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¹ "1901 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 18 October 2019), entry for James Johnstone (*sic*), Registration district: Dennistoun, Enumeration district: 50, Household schedule number: 17, Line: 12, Roll: CSSCT1901_275

² "1911 Scotland census," *ScotlandsPeople* (<http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>: accessed 9 October 2019), entry for Johnston, James, District: Cathcart, City/County: Lanark, GROS data: 560/00 009/L14

³ *Ibid.*

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- ⁴ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 12 October 2019), entry for James Johnstone (*sic*), Page: 184768
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 184770
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 184772
- ⁷ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *National Archives* (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk: accessed 9 November 2019), entry for Royal Scots Fusiliers Regiment, Sub unit: 1st Battalion, Piece description: Piece 1422/3_1, Page 108
- ⁸ "1st Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers" *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Scots_Fusiliers: accessed 20 December 2018)
- ⁹ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *National Archives* (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk: accessed 9 November 2019), entry for Royal Scots Fusiliers Regiment, Sub unit: 1st Battalion, Piece description: Piece 1422/3_2, Page 43
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 48–57
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56
- ¹² "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 12 October 2019), entry for James Johnstone (*sic*), Page: 184772
- ¹³ "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," *National Archives* (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk: accessed 9 November 2019), entry for Royal Scots Fusiliers Regiment, Sub unit: 1st Battalion, Piece description: Piece 1422/3_2, Page 72
- ¹⁴ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 25 October 2019), entry for Johnston, J.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 3 November 2019), entry for Johnston, James, Service No: 32410
- ¹⁷ "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 5 November 2019), entry for James Johnstone (*sic*)
- ¹⁸ "1901 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 18 October 2019), entries for Alfred and Charles Johnstone (*sic*), Registration district: Dennistoun, Enumeration district: 50, Household schedule number: 17, Line: 12, Roll: CSSCT1901_275
- ¹⁹ "1901 Scotland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 18 October 2019), entry for Cordelia Johnstone (*sic*), Registration district: Dennistoun, Enumeration district: 50, Household schedule number: 17, Line: 12, Roll: CSSCT1901_275
- ²⁰ "New Scottish Companies," *The Scotsman*, 29 June 1946, page 3, *British Newspaper Archive* (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk: accessed 10 November 2019)