

Private Edward Parker McGee®
Regimental number: 37064
16th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers

born: 1892–died: 9 August 1917

Private Edward Parker McGee's family suffered greatly in World War I: in all, four brothers were killed in action, including three who died on the same day. The local newspaper reported:

THREE SONS IN ONE DAY. On Oct. 12th, 1916, Thomas Parker McGee died in France of wounds received three days before. On the same day his two brothers, James and Bert were missing. Through the Red Cross Enquiry it has now transpired that on that day Pte. H. Jackson, Suffolk Regt., lately in hospital in France, thus reports: "We made our advance towards evening, and I saw Pte. Bert Parker McGee killed by a high explosive shell on No Man's Land." There is as yet no news of James.¹

James (whose death was subsequently confirmed) and Bert were both privates in the 7th Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment while Thomas, also a private, served with the 1st Battalion of the Cambridgeshire Regiment.²

Edward survived them by less than a year.

Edward Parker McGee was born in Stuntney, Cambridgeshire, in the spring of 1892,³ the sixth of ten surviving children born to Sarah Payton. Sarah had married Henry McGee in 1878⁴ and together they had two children: Edith (b. 1881)⁵ and Samuel (b. 1882).⁶ No further records, including death records, could be found pertaining to Henry McGee.

Sarah then entered into a relationship with Thomas Parker, the son of a neighbouring family.⁷ The 1891 Census describes Thomas as a lodger in a household headed by Sarah⁸ that included, in addition to Edith and Samuel, three more children: Lily (b. 1885),⁹ Joseph (b. 1888)¹⁰ and Rhoda (b. 1890).¹¹ By the 1901 Census, Thomas is described as the head of the household, living with Sarah as his "reputed" wife.¹² After Edward, Sarah and Thomas had four more sons: Thomas (b. 1893),¹³ James (b. 1895),¹⁴ Bertie (b. 1898),¹⁵ and William (b. 1902).¹⁶ Another child, born in 1910, died at birth.¹⁷ All the children born after Samuel carry the name Parker in addition to the surname McGee.

In 1911 Edward was boarding with his sister Rhoda, her husband, Reginald Smith, and their young daughter, Lily, on Nornea Farm near Ely, Cambridgeshire, where both men worked as



Private Edward Parker McGee
Source: www.stuntneyvillage.org.uk



Grave marker for Private Edward Parker McGee
Source: "Global, Find a Grave Index for Burials at Sea and Other Select Burial Locations, 1300s–Current," *Ancestry.com*

“milkmen.”¹⁸ Also living on the farm was the Newell family,¹⁹ which included a daughter, Sarah Jane.²⁰ She was living and working as a domestic in the household of a widow of private means in the nearby village of Wilburton.²¹ Edward and Sarah were married in Ely, Cambridgeshire, in the fall of 1913.²² They had one child, a daughter, Gladys Edna, born on 13 July 1917.²³

Edward enlisted in Bury St. Edmund's, Suffolk,²⁴ around August 1916, based on the war gratuity awarded his widow.²⁵ First a member of the Northamptonshire Regiment, he was subsequently transferred to the 16th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers.²⁶

At the beginning of August 1917, the battalion was in the trenches near the coastal town of Oostduinkerke, Belgium. On 7 August, "D" Company and a platoon of "A" Company were preparing for a raid on the German trenches in front of them when heavy shelling resulted in about 40 casualties, mostly in the "A" Company platoon.²⁷

Edward was admitted that day to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with a right leg fracture. He died at 1:15 a.m. on 9 August 1917 and was buried in the Adinkerke Military Cemetery the next day.²⁸ It is unlikely that Edward ever met his daughter; nevertheless, his headstone bears the inscription, "Gone But Not Forgotten From His Wife and Daughter."²⁹

Edward was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).³⁰

Edward's wife Sarah Jane never remarried. She was living in Witchford Village, about 4 kilometres west of Ely, Cambridgeshire, when she was awarded Edward's pension;³¹ she was still living in Witchford, with her daughter Gladys, in 1965.³² Sarah Jane died in 1970³³ and is buried in St. Andrew's Churchyard in Witchford.³⁴ Gladys married late in life: in 1977 she married John H. Tye.³⁵ Unfortunately, she passed away just two years later and is buried, like her mother, in St. Andrew's Churchyard, Witchford.³⁶

With respect to the rest of his family, Edward's father **Thomas** died in 1932³⁷ and his mother **Sarah** in 1947.³⁸

Edward's half-sister **Edith** married Edward Cross in 1910³⁹ and had five children: Jack (b. 1911),⁴⁰ Mollie (b. 1912),⁴¹ Lily (b. 1913),⁴² James Thomas Edward Bertie (b. 1918),⁴³ and Clara (b. 1920).⁴⁴ Unfortunately, like the uncles for whom he was named, Private James T. E. B. Cross died while serving, in his case with the 2nd Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment, in 1941; he is buried in the Karachi War Cemetery in Pakistan.⁴⁵ Edith died in 1945,⁴⁶ and her husband in 1951.⁴⁷

His half-brother **Samuel** married Rachel Cross in 1906⁴⁸; they had one daughter.⁴⁹ Samuel died on 19 March 1961 and is buried in the City of Ely Cemetery;⁵⁰ Rachel, who died on 18 April 1966,⁵¹ is buried next to her husband.⁵²

Edward's sister **Lily** married Arthur Nunn in 1905;⁵³ they had no children, and Lily passed away in 1914.⁵⁴ In 1915 Arthur married for a second time;⁵⁵ he died in 1936.⁵⁶

His brother **Joseph** married Edith Baulk in 1909;⁵⁷ the couple had a daughter, Beatrice, in 1915⁵⁸ and a son, Thomas, in 1922.⁵⁹ Joseph passed away in 1970;⁶⁰ his wife had died in 1954.⁶¹

Edward's sister **Rhoda** died in 1965.⁶²

The youngest of the Parker McGee children, **William**, married Emily Murfitt in 1926.⁶³ They had two children: a son whom they named Bertie Edward Parker McGee,^{64 65} commemorating two of William's brothers, and a daughter named Margaret.⁶⁶ William passed away in November 1982 and is buried in the City of Ely Cemetery⁶⁷ next to his wife, who had died a month earlier.⁶⁸

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¹ "Stuntney Heroes," *Stuntney* (<http://www.stuntneyvillage.org.uk/WW1.htm#ParkerMcGee>: accessed 25 July 2020), entry for Bert, Edward, James and Thomas Parker McGee

² James' death, as well as the units in which Thomas, James and Bert Parker McGee served, were established from their respective entries in the "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919" database.

³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Edward Parker McGee, Registration district: Ely, Inferred county: Cambridgeshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 556

⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Sarah Payton, Registration district: Ely, Inferred county: Cambridgeshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 1223

⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Edith McGee, Registration district: Ely, Inferred county: Cambridgeshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 568

⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Samuel McGee, Registration district: Ely, Inferred county: Cambridgeshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 640

⁷ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 22 July 2020), entry for Thomas Parker, Registration district: Ely, Sub-registration district: Ely, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 9, Piece: 1685, Folio: 34, Page: 7

⁸ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Thomas Parker, Registration district: Ely, Sub-registration district: Ely, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 9, Piece: 1298, Folio: 121

⁹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Lily McGee, Registration district: Ely, Inferred county: Cambridgeshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 598

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¹¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Rhoda Parker McGee, Registration district: Ely, Inferred county: Cambridgeshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 527

¹² "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Thomas Parker, Registration district: Ely, Sub-registration district: Ely, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 09, Piece: 1546, Folio: 17, Page: 5, Household schedule number: 30

¹³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Thomas Parker McGee, Registration district: Ely, Inferred county: Cambridgeshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 522

¹⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for James Parker McGee, Registration district: Ely, Inferred county: Cambridgeshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 524

¹⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Bertie McGee, Registration district: Ely, Inferred county: Cambridgeshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 543

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- ¹⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for William Parker McGee, Registration district: Ely, Inferred county: Cambridgeshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 478
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- ²² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 21 July 2020), entry for Edward P McGee, Registration district: Ely, Inferred county: Cambridgeshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 1263
- ²³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 21 July 2020), entry for Gladys E McGee, Registration district: Ely, Inferred county: Cambridgeshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 678
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- ²⁵ Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratiuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 23 July 2020)
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- ³¹ "UK, WWI Pension Ledgers and Index Cards, 1914–1923," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Sarah Jane McGee
- ³² "Cambridgeshire, England, Electoral Registers, Burgess Rolls and Poll Books, 1772–1966," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Sarah J. McGee
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