

**Private William John Gray<sup>©</sup>**  
**Regimental number: 41205**  
**11th Battalion, Manchester Regiment**

**born: 1887-died: 3 October 1918**

When Private William John Gray died on 3 October 1918,<sup>1</sup> he left a wife and 2-year old son in Hyde, Cheshire.

William married his wife Hannah Downhill in 1912 and their marriage was registered in Ashton under Lyne,<sup>2</sup> Lancashire—about 3 miles north of Hyde.<sup>3</sup> Hannah was born on 26 August 1886<sup>4</sup> in Ashton, one of 16 children born to Robert and Mary Jane Downhill—nine of whom had died before 1911. Before her marriage, Hannah was a cotton weaver and the family was living at 115 Ashton Road, in Newton.<sup>5</sup> William and Hannah's only child, also William John, was born on 31 January 1916<sup>6</sup> in Ashton.<sup>7</sup>

When their son was about 6 months old, William enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force. He enlisted in Luton,<sup>8</sup> probably in about July 1916<sup>9</sup>. He first served with the Prince of Wales's Volunteers (South Lancashire) Regiment (regimental number 28811). At some point he transferred to the 11th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment<sup>10</sup> and was with this battalion when he died. On 3 October 1918, he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with shrapnel wounds to his right thigh and left foot. He died the same day.<sup>11</sup>

A casualty clearing station was a military medical unit behind the front lines, usually located near transportation. Casualties who did not die or could not be adequately treated in the CCS were stabilized before being transported to a field or military hospital.<sup>12</sup>

William was buried the following day in Duisans British Military Cemetery (Plot 8, Row A, Grave 96) with the Canadian chaplain W. Fisher presiding.<sup>13</sup> Duisans British Military Cemetery is located in Étrun, near Arras, France. The first burials in the cemetery took place in March 1917.<sup>14</sup> No. 1 CCCS arrived at the beginning of September 1918 and was stationed near Duisans for two months. As a result of the serious and urgent nature of the cases admitted to No. 1 CCCS, the death rate was high in October—a total of 83 deaths occurred during the month.<sup>15</sup>



**War Memorial at St Mary's Church, Ashton under Lyne**

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Toward the end of the war, William and his wife were living at 3 Gregory Street in the Newton neighbourhood of Hyde.<sup>16</sup> That is where the chaplain sent a letter to notify Hannah of her husband's death.<sup>17</sup> She also received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.<sup>18</sup>

William was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).<sup>19</sup> He is also remembered on the memorial plaque in St Mary's Church on Talbot Road in Newton.<sup>20</sup>

William was born in Luton, Bedfordshire in about 1888,<sup>21</sup> probably the son of William and Eliza (nee Horley) Gray.<sup>22</sup> He was baptized in St Mark's Church in Dukinfield, Cheshire on 21 September 1891.<sup>23</sup> His parents had married in Luton in 1880 and the following year were living on Vicarage Road in Luton, where William Sr. was a bricklayer's labourer.<sup>24</sup> It is not known where they were in 1891 but, by 1891 and the baptisms of two siblings,<sup>25</sup> the family had moved north. In 1901, they were living at 88 Crawford Street in Ashton. William, at the age of 13, was a cotton spinner. William Sr. was not with the family—he was a patient in the District Infirmary on Darnton Road in Ashton.<sup>26</sup> Ten years later, the family had moved to 1 Mary Street in Dukinfield, Cheshire, but William was still a cotton spinner. Although the 1911 Census indicated that his mother Eliza was still married, it is not known where William Sr. was in 1911.

William Sr. and Eliza had six children, most of whom were born in Luton before the family's move north to Ashton.<sup>27</sup> **Mary Ann E** (may have also been known as Elizabeth) was born on 30 June 1881<sup>28</sup> and married William Holt in Ashton in 1911. In 1939, they were living at 74 Chapel Street in Dukinfield, where William was a club steward and Mary a club stewardess.

**Annie** was born 16 December 1882<sup>29</sup> and married Harry Ousey at St James the Apostle Church in Ashton on 29 October 1904.<sup>30</sup> In 1911, they were living at 73 Chapel Street in Dukinfield. They had a son, Leonard Gray Ousey, born on 25 March 1905.<sup>31</sup> Harry probably died in 1937<sup>32</sup> and, in 1939, Annie was living with her daughter Florence<sup>33</sup> and her husband Harry A. Bennett at 13 Pearson Street in Dukinfield.<sup>34</sup> She died in 1954 in Ashton.<sup>35</sup>

**Lucy** was born in 1885<sup>36</sup> in Luton and baptized on 2 September 1891 in St. Mark's Church in Dukinfield, Cheshire. No record of Lucy's death can be found, but she does not appear with the family, or in any other record, in the 1911 Census. The 1911 Census indicates that one of Eliza's six children had died before 1911. This may have been Lucy.

**Florence** (also known as Fanny) (born 1 December 1889)<sup>37</sup> and probably remained single. In 1939, she may have been living at 91 Offerton Lane in Stockport, Cheshire, where she was an estate and insurance agent.

**Harry**, the only child born in Ashton,<sup>38</sup> was born on 7 July 1892.<sup>39</sup> He married Ellen S. Bridgehouse in Ashton in 1921.<sup>40</sup> In 1939, Harry, a general labour, and Ellen were living at 78 Chapel Street in Dukinfield—just a few houses from his sister Annie.<sup>41</sup> He died in 1975.<sup>42</sup>

William's wife Hannah remarried after the war, wedding Herbert A Pointon in 1921 in Ashton.<sup>43</sup> Herbert Asprey Pointon, a grinder and glazier working at an iron works, also served in the Great War.<sup>44</sup> He enlisted in December 1915 as a driver (regimental number: 161477) in the Royal Engineers and served in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. He was demobilized in 1919. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Hannah and Herbert were living at 128 Ashton Road in Hyde with Hannah and William's son who was a motor driver.<sup>45</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 7 June 2020), entry for Gray, C. [*sic*]
- <sup>2</sup> For ease of reading, it is referred to as Ashton in this biography.
- <sup>3</sup> Ashton under Lyne was historically part of Lancashire. Hyde and Dukinfield, where the family lived in 1911, were part of Cheshire. All are now part of Greater Manchester and are within 10 kilometres of each other. (*Wikipedia* (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>: accessed 15 June 2020) entries for “Ashton under Lyne,” “Hyde, Greater M.anchester,” and “Dukinfield”)
- <sup>4</sup> “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 14 June 2020), entry for Hannah Pointon, Schedule number: 297, Sub-schedule Number: 2, Enumeration district: LFDG, Registration district: 443 A2
- <sup>5</sup> “1911 England Census,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 11 June 2020), entry for Hannah Downhill, Registration district: Ashton under Lyne, Registration district number: 468, Sub-registration district: Newton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 03, Piece: 24399
- <sup>6</sup> “1939 England and Wales Register,” entry for Hannah Pointon
- <sup>7</sup> “GRO online index (birth),” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 November 2020) entry for Gray, William John, Registration district: Ashton under Lyne, Volume 08D, Page 765
- <sup>8</sup> “UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 June 2020), entry for William John Gray
- <sup>9</sup> Based on “War Gratuity Calculator” (<https://wargratiuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 June 2020), entry for William John Gray
- <sup>10</sup> “UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919,” entry for William John Gray
- <sup>11</sup> “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” Gray, C. [*sic*]
- <sup>12</sup> “Casualty Clearing Station,” *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualty\\_Clearing\\_Station](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualty_Clearing_Station): accessed 2 May 2020)
- <sup>13</sup> “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” Gray, C. [*sic*]
- <sup>14</sup> “Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun,” *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org); accessed 7 October 2015)
- <sup>15</sup> “War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13–1919/03/31,” *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/>; accessed 17 June 2015)
- <sup>16</sup> “Electoral registers 1832-1932,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 13 June 2020), entry for William John Gray
- <sup>17</sup> “No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station,” Gray, C. [*sic*]
- <sup>18</sup> “UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929,” entry for William John Gray
- <sup>19</sup> “British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 June 2020), entry for William J. Gray
- <sup>20</sup> “War Memorials Register,” Imperial War Museum (<https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/names/>: accessed 13 June 2020), entry for St Mary’s Church, © Mike Berrell (WMR-45256). The image is used under IWM Non Commercial Licence, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>
- <sup>21</sup> “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 12 June 2020), entry for William J. Gray, Registration district: Ashton under Lyne, Sub-registration district: Ashton Town, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 14, Piece: 3783, Folio: 145, Page: 24, Household schedule number: 164
- <sup>22</sup> “1901 England Census,” entry for William J. Gray; England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 12 June 2020), entry for William Gray, Registration district: Luton, Inferred county: Bedfordshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 680
- <sup>23</sup> “Cheshire, England, Parish Registers, 1538–1909,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 7 June 2020), entry for William John Gray

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- <sup>24</sup> "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 12 June 2020), entry for Eliza Gray, Registration district: Luton, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 19, Piece: 1651, Folio: 36, Page: 17
- <sup>25</sup> "Cheshire, England, Select Bishop's Transcripts, 1576-1933," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Lucy Gray, FHL film number: 1647428; "Cheshire, England, Parish Registers, 1538-1909," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Florence Gray
- <sup>26</sup> "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 12 June 2020), entry for William Gray, Registration district: Ashton under Lyne, Sub-registration district: Ashton Town, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 12, Piece: 3783, Folio: 110, Page: 55, Household schedule number: 356
- <sup>27</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 12 June 2020), entry for William John Gray, Registration district: Ashton under Lyne, Registration district number: 468, Sub-registration district: Dukinfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 06, Piece: 24408
- <sup>28</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 12 June 2020), entry for Mary Ann E Gray, Registration district: Luton, Inferred county: Bedfordshire, Volume: 3b, Page: 413
- <sup>29</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Annie Busey [sic], Schedule number: 74, Sub-schedule Number: 3, Enumeration district: LESR, Registration district: 443a 3
- <sup>30</sup> "Manchester, England, Marriages and Banns, 175-41930," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Annie Gray
- <sup>31</sup> "Manchester, England, Baptisms, 1813-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Leonard Gray Ousey Reference number: L163/1/1/4, Item Number: 11, Archive Roll: 845
- <sup>32</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Harry Ousey, Registration district: Hyde, Inferred county: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 441
- <sup>33</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Florence E. Ousey, Registration district: Hyde, Inferred county: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 441
- <sup>34</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Annie Busey [sic]
- <sup>35</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Annie Ousey, Registration district: Ashton, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8d, Page: 118
- <sup>36</sup> "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 November 2020) entry for Gray, Lucy, Registration district: Luton, Volume 03B, Page 403
- <sup>37</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Florence Gray, Schedule number: 4, Sub-schedule Number: 1, Enumeration district: LCTO, Registration district: 443-3
- <sup>38</sup> "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 November 2020) entry for Gray, Harry, Registration district: Ashton under Lyne, Volume 08D, Page 494
- <sup>39</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Harry Gray, Schedule number: 53, Sub-schedule Number: 1, Enumeration district: LESK, Registration district: 44323
- <sup>40</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Harry Gray, Registration district: Ashton, Inferred county: Lancashire, Cheshire, Volume: 8d, Page: 872
- <sup>41</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," entry for Harry Gray
- <sup>42</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 June 2020), entry for Harry Gray, Registration district: Tameside, Inferred county: Greater Manchester, Volume: 39, Page: 1894
- <sup>43</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 11 June 2020), entry for Hannah Gray, Registration district: Ashton, Inferred county: Lancashire, Cheshire, Volume: 8d, Page: 905

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<sup>44</sup> "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 16 June 2020), entry for Herbert Asprey Pointon

<sup>45</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," entry for Hannah Pointon