

Corporal William Hessner[©]

Regimental number: 706435

"B" Battery, 331st Brigade, Royal Field Artillery

born: 1898–died: 11 August 1917

William's parents, Albert William Hessner and Emma Haythorn, were married at St. Philip Church in Manchester on 22 December 1894.¹ William's father was also known as William; most later documents invert his names as William Albert Hessner. (Since this was his preferred name as an adult, William Sr. will be used to differentiate father from son.)

Emma gave birth to the couple's first child, a son named Albert, in October 1896;² unfortunately, the baby did not survive.³ Their second son, William, was born in the spring of 1898;⁴ he was baptised on 10 July 1898 at St. Thomas Church in Hyde, Cheshire.⁵ Emma and William Sr. then had two daughters: Edith, born in 1900⁶ and Lilian, born in 1906.⁷ Both girls were baptised in the same parish church as their brother.⁸ ⁹ Sometime after Lilian's birth, the family moved from Hyde to 246 Birch Lane, Dukinfield, Lancashire.¹⁰ Despite being in another county, the distance between the two towns is less than 5 miles according to Google Maps and both are now part of Tameside, itself part of Greater Manchester.¹¹

In October 1915,¹² when he was just 17, William enlisted with the 2nd East Lancashire Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery (which later became the 331st Brigade).¹³ Part of the 66th East Lancashire Division,¹⁴ the brigade was a 'second line' unit formed in February 1915 after the War Office ordered all Territorial Force units to create a reserve unit.¹⁵ (The Territorial Force was a part-time volunteer component of the British Army created in 1908 to augment British land Forces.)¹⁶ The brigade was stationed at Forest Row Camp in the Ashdown Forest, East Sussex, until February 1916, when the division was transferred to the Southern Army Home Defence Force and moved to the area around Colchester, Essex.¹⁷ The division was ordered to France on 11 February 1917; by 25 March all units had arrived and were placed under XI Corps of the British Expeditionary Force.¹⁸

When William was admitted to No.1 Canadian Casualty Clearing station on 8 August 1917 with gunshot wounds to his head and knee,¹⁹ the division was operating on the Flanders Coast.²⁰ William succumbed to his wounds at 3 a.m. on 11 August 1917²¹ and two days later²² was buried in plot C9 of the Adinkerke Military Cemetery.²³

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).²⁴

Unfortunately, William's mother, **Emma**, did not survive her son by very long: she passed away at the age of 46 in October 1919.²⁵ **William Sr.** married Charlotte Lonsdale, a neighbour on Birch Lane,²⁶ in the fall of 1920.²⁷ William died on 8 February 1937, still living on Birch Lane.²⁸ Charlotte lived until January 1963.²⁹



Grave marker for Corporal William Hessner

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

William's two sisters both married: **Edith** married George Fletcher in August 1923;³⁰ **Lilian** married Harold W. Mayers in the summer of 1930.³¹ In July 1928, Edith gave birth to twins, Doreen³² and Donald.³³ Lilian and Harold had two daughters, Rita, born in 1932³⁴ and Gwen, born in 1935.³⁵

Edith lived her whole life in Dukinfield, where she passed away on 18 January 1983,³⁶ her husband having died in April 1975.³⁷ Lilian and her husband relocated to Wales, where Harold died in 1966³⁸ and Edith in 1992.³⁹

© 2020 BIFHSGO

¹ "Manchester, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1930," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Albert William Hessner, Reference number: M299/3/2/7

² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Albert Hessner, Registration district: Stockport, Inferred county: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 20

³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Albert Hessner, Inferred county: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 12

⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for William Hessner, Registration district: Stockport, Inferred county: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 27

⁵ "Cheshire, England, Parish Registers, 1538–1909," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for William Hessner

⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Edith Hessner, Registration district: Stockport, Inferred county: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 7

⁷ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Lilian Hessner, Registration district: Stockport, Inferred county: Cheshire, Volume: 8a, Page: 16

⁸ "Cheshire, England, Parish Registers, 1538–1909," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Edith Hessner

⁹ "Cheshire, England, Parish Registers, 1538–1909," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Lilian Hessner

¹⁰ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for William Albert Hessner, Registration district: Ashton under Lyne, Registration district number: 468, Sub-registration district: Dukinfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 24412

¹¹ *Wikipedia* (www.wikipedia.org: accessed 3 November 2020), entries for Hyde, Greater Manchester, and Dukinfield

¹² Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 3 November 2020)

¹³ "War Diary, 331 Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, September 1915–February 1916," *The National Archives* (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk: accessed 3 November 2020)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ "66th (2nd East Lancashire) Division," *The Long, Long Trail* (www.longlongtrail.co.uk: accessed 4 November 2020)

¹⁶ "Territorial Force," *Wikipedia* (www.wikipedia.org: accessed 4 November 2020)

¹⁷ "War: The Military on Ashdown Forest, 1793–1925," *Nutley Historical Society* (www.nutleyhistorical.org.uk: accessed 4 November 2020), p. 18

-
- ¹⁸ "66th (2nd East Lancashire) Division," *The Long, Long Trail*
- ¹⁹ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 5 July 2018), entry for Hessner, W.
- ²⁰ "66th (2nd East Lancashire) Division," *The Long, Long Trail*
- ²¹ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 5 July 2018), entry for Hessner, W
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Hessner, W., Service No: 706435
- ²⁴ "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Wm Hessner
- ²⁵ "GRO online index–death," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 4 November 2020), entry for Hessner, Emma, Volume 08D, Page 508
- ²⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Charlotte Lonsdale, Registration district: Ashton under Lyne, Registration district number: 468, Sub-registration district: Dukinfield, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 24412
- ²⁷ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for William A Hessner, Registration district: Ashton, Inferred county: Lancashire, Cheshire, Volume: 8d, Page: 946
- ²⁸ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for William Albert Hessner
- ²⁹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Charlotte Hessner, Registration district: Ashton, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 10b, Page: 169
- ³⁰ "Manchester, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1930," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Edith Hessner, Reference number: GB127.M190/1/2/12
- ³¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Lilian Hessner, Registration district: Hayfield, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 2299
- ³² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Doreen Fletcher, Registration district: Ashton, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8d, Page: 984
- ³³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Donald Fletcher, Registration district: Ashton, Inferred county: Lancashire, Volume: 8d, Page: 984
- ³⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Rita Mayers, Registration district: Hayfield, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 1164
- ³⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Gwen Mayers, Registration district: Hayfield, Inferred county: Derbyshire, Volume: 7b, Page: 1262
- ³⁶ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Edith Fletcher
- ³⁷ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for George Fletcher
- ³⁸ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Harold Mayers

³⁹ “England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com; accessed 30 October 2020), entry for Lilian Mayers, Registration district: Hay, Inferred county: Powys, Volume: 26, Page: 167