

**Sapper William George Trask<sup>©</sup>**  
**Regimental number: 23116**  
**8th Divisional Signal Company, Royal Engineers**

**born: 1891–died: 12 October 1918**

Sapper William George Trask's father was George Trask, born on 8 October 1853 in Yeovil, Somerset. George Sr. was working as an agricultural labourer when he enlisted in the Royal Marines on 8 October 1872—his 19th birthday. It would appear that this decision would define his future family life.<sup>1</sup>

George had an “exemplary” career in the service. His served on many ships, but of interest to his family story is that, beginning in March 1889, he was serving on HMS *Penelope* and then, after 14 October 1890, on HMS *Himalaya*. Both of these ships probably took him to South Africa,<sup>2</sup> where he may have met (and possibly married) his future wife, Eliza Bingle. Eliza was born in the Cape Colony—a British colony in the current South Africa—in about 1868. They probably married in about 1890,<sup>3</sup> but no evidence of their marriage was found.

In the spring of 1891, George and Eliza were living at 26 Alma Street in Alverstoke, just outside Gosport, Hampshire,<sup>4</sup> where William was born later the same year.<sup>5</sup> In the last months of 1890 and the first half of 1891, his father was stationed in Portsmouth: just across the harbour from Alverstoke. George was discharged from the Royal Marines on 11 October 1893 with five good conduct badges.

By 1901, George and Eliza had three children—William, Elizabeth (born in 1895)<sup>6</sup> and Walter (born in 1898).<sup>7</sup> George had now returned to being an agricultural labourer and the family was living in West Coker, near Yeovil in Somerset.<sup>8</sup> Two more children followed: Edward (born in 1901)<sup>9</sup> and Henry (born on 2 July 1903).<sup>10</sup>

By 1911, William had left home and was serving as a private in the 1st Battalion (Prince Albert's) of the Somerset Light Infantry. He was living in the Royal Horse Artillery Barracks, near St. Martin's Road in Dorchester.<sup>11</sup>

William enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force early in the war. He joined the 5th Divisional Signal Company of the Royal Engineers as a sapper and went overseas on 18 August 1914.<sup>12</sup> At some point he transferred to the 8th Divisional Signal Company.<sup>13</sup> A sapper performed military engineering duties, such as “breaching fortifications, demolitions, bridge-building, laying or clearing minefields, preparing field defenses, and road and airfield construction and repair.”<sup>14</sup>

He survived the four long years of the war, but was fatally wounded on 11 October 1918. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station<sup>15</sup> that day with shrapnel wounds to his head, a compound fracture of his right leg, wounds to his ankles and left leg and multiple wounds to his left arm.<sup>16</sup> William died on 12 October 1918 and was buried the same day in Duisans British Military Cemetery (Plot VII, Row B, Grave 58),<sup>17</sup> with the Canadian chaplain W. Fisher presiding.<sup>18</sup> The chaplain notified his father of his death<sup>19</sup> and it was announced in the local newspaper.<sup>20</sup>

William was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1914–15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).<sup>21</sup>

William's mother died in the first half of 1918,<sup>22</sup> just a few months before her son. His father George died in 1933.<sup>23</sup>

The first of William's brothers, **Walter**, also served in WW I, enlisting early in the war. He had been in the Reserve when he joined the Grenadier Guards as a private (regimental number 19130) on 7 September 1914. He went to the Western Front on 16 March 1915.<sup>24</sup> He received gunshot wounds to his lower extremity<sup>25</sup> and was discharged on 16 December 1916.<sup>26</sup> He had may have lost his leg.<sup>27</sup> Like his brother, he was awarded the British War Medal), the Victory Medal and the 1914–15 Star.<sup>28</sup>

A telegram received by Mr WEST COKER, George Trask, High-street, on Friday, announced the sad tidings that his oldest son, Sapper William George Trask, Royal Engineers, aged 26, was killed in France on October 12th. Sapper Trask was 10 years in the Army and was in the first draft sent to France in August, 1914, when war broke out. The sympathy of the whole parish is felt for the bereaved father, who only a few months ago lost his wife, and has another son who lost a leg while fighting in France.

Announcement of Sapper Trask's death

Source: *Western Chronicle*, Findmypast

Right after the war, Walter married Olive M. Crees in Wells, Somerset.<sup>29</sup> In 1939, he and Olive were living in the village of Street, 15 miles north of Yeovil, where Walter manufactured shanks in a shoe factory.<sup>30</sup> He died on 8 February 1959 in Street. He left at least one child—a daughter, Joyce, born in 1921.<sup>31</sup>

William's sister **Elizabeth** left home before the age of 15, when she was working as a domestic servant in the home of Edith Wilson, an elementary school teacher in Yeovil.<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth probably married Frederick H. Perry in 1933 in Yeovil.<sup>33</sup> It appears that, in 1935, they had a child, William George—probably named after his uncle. Sadly, he died soon after birth.<sup>34</sup> Four years later, Elizabeth and Frederick may have been living at 10 Moor Lane in Loughborough, Leicestershire,<sup>35</sup> where Elizabeth died in 1966.<sup>36</sup>

Nothing is known for certain about William's brother **Edward**. His younger brother **Henry** probably married Beulah C. I. Baker in 1934 in Yeovil.<sup>37</sup> Five years later, they were living at 7 Uplands in West Coker, where Henry was a press operator in the aircraft products industry.<sup>38</sup> Henry probably died in Yeovil in 1984.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The National Archives* (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>: accessed 29 March 2021), entry for George Trask, Reference ADM 159/2/921. Unless otherwise stated, all information about George Trask's service in the Royal Marines comes from this source.

<sup>2</sup> "HMS Penelope (1867)," *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS\\_Penelope\\_\(1867\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Penelope_(1867))): accessed 29 March 2021; "HMS Himalaya (1854)," *Wikipedia* ([https://military.wikia.org/wiki/HMS\\_Himalaya\\_\(1854\)](https://military.wikia.org/wiki/HMS_Himalaya_(1854))): accessed 29 March 2021

<sup>3</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 29 March 2021), entry for George Trask, Registration district number: 309, Registration district: Coker, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 14387

<sup>4</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 29 March 2021), entry for George Trask, Registration district: Alverstoke, Sub-registration district: Alverstoke, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 11, Piece: 879, Folio: 94

<sup>5</sup> "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 28 March 2021) entry for Trask, William George, Registration district: Alverstoke, Volume 02B, Page 526

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- <sup>6</sup> "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 28 March 2021) entry for Trask, Elizabeth, Registration district: Yeovil, Volume 03C, Page 387
- <sup>7</sup> "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 28 March 2021) entry for Trask, Walter, Registration district: Yeovil, Volume 03C, Page 388
- <sup>8</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry*, entry for George Trask
- <sup>9</sup> "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 28 March 2021), entry for Trask, Edward, Registration district: Yeovil, Volume 03C, Page 362
- <sup>10</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 April 2021), entry for Henry Trask, Registration district: Yeovil, Inferred county: Somerset, Volume: 23, Page: 1767
- <sup>11</sup> "1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 29 March 2021), entry for George William Trask, Registration district: Dorchester, Registration district number: 264, Sub-district: Dorchester, Sub-district number: 1, Enumeration district: 12, Piece: 12388
- <sup>12</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 28 March 2021), entry for William G Trask
- <sup>13</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 29 March 2021), entry for Trask, G.
- <sup>14</sup> "Sapper," *Wikipedia* (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sapper>: accessed 30 March 2021)
- <sup>15</sup> A casualty clearing station was a military medical unit behind the front lines, usually located near transportation. Casualties who did not soon die or could not be adequately treated in the CCS were stabilized before being transported to a field or military hospital. "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>16</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa*, entry for Trask, G.
- <sup>17</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 29 March 2021), entry for W G Trask
- <sup>18</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa*, entry for Trask, G.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> "West Coker," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 1 April 2021), entry for William George Trask, *Western Chronicle*, 25 October 1918
- <sup>21</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry*, entry for William G Trask
- <sup>22</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 21 January 2021), entry for Eliza Trask, Registration district: Yeovil, Inferred county: Somerset, Volume: 5c, Page: 440
- <sup>23</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 April 2021), entry for George Trask, Registration district: Yeovil, Inferred county: Somerset, Volume: 5c, Page: 557
- <sup>24</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 April 2021), entry for Walter Trask
- <sup>25</sup> "UK, WWI Pension Ledgers and Index Cards, 1914–1923," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 April 2021), entry Walter Trask, Reference Number: 8/MT/No. 1813
- <sup>26</sup> "UK, Silver War Badge Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 April 2021), entry Walter Trask
- <sup>27</sup> "West Coker," *Findmypast*, entry for William George Trask
- <sup>28</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry*, entry for William G Trask
- <sup>29</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 April 2021), entry for Walter Trask, Registration district: Wells, Inferred county: Somerset, Volume: 5c, Page: 1222

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- <sup>30</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 April 2021), entry for Walter Trask, Schedule number: 82, Sub-schedule Number: 1, Enumeration district: WONB, Registration district: 313-2
- <sup>31</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 April 2021), entry for Joyce Trask, Registration district: Wells, Inferred county: Somerset, Volume: 5c, Page: 694
- <sup>32</sup> "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 30 March 2021), entry for Elizabeth Trask, Registration district number: 309, Registration district: Coker, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 14387
- <sup>33</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 April 2021), entry for Elizabeth Trask, Registration district: Yeovil, Inferred county: Somerset, Volume: 5c, Page: 798
- <sup>34</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 April 2021), entry for George W Perry, Registration district: Yeovil, Inferred county: Somerset, Volume: 5c, Page 10; "GRO online index (death)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 30 March 2021) entry for Perry, George William, Registration district: Yeovil, Volume 05C, Page 419
- <sup>35</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 30 March 2021), entry for Elizabeth Perry, Schedule number: 56, Sub-schedule number: 2, Enumeration district: RFGJ, Borough: Loughborough, Registration district: 405-1
- <sup>36</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 30 March 2021), entry for Elizabeth Perry, Registration district: Leicester, Inferred county: Leicestershire, Volume: 3a, Page: 594
- <sup>37</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 April 2021), entry for Henry Trask, Registration district: Yeovil, Inferred county: Somerset, Volume: 5c, Page: 828
- <sup>38</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 April 2021), entry for Henry Trask, Schedule number: 5, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration district: WQGF, Registration district: Chard Crewkerne 308
- <sup>39</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry*, entry for Henry Trask