

Private Percy Johnson MM©
Regimental number: 19736
"C" Company, 10th Battalion, Canadian Infantry

born: 18 November 1890-died: 13 October 1918

Private Percy Johnson was born on 18 November 1890¹ in Mareham-Le-Fen in Lincolnshire, the second son of Henry and Rose (née Taylor) Johnson. Both parents were born in Lincolnshire—Henry in 1850 in Mareham-Le-Fen and Rose on 6 September 1861² in Collingham.³ They were married on 8 May 1883 at the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Horncastle⁴ and had seven children:

- Gertrude Sarah (born on 5 June 1885)⁵
- Florence Emily (born on 31 January 1887)⁶
- Reuben (born on 31 July 1888)⁷
- Percy
- Ethel Mary (born in 1891)⁸
- Wilfred Henry (born in 1893)⁹
- Mable Annie (born in 1895)¹⁰

Percy's father was a butcher and, in 1891, the family was living on Main Road in Mareham-le-Fen. This strong Methodist family continued to live in Mareham, but specific addresses are not given in subsequent census records. In 1901, there were two children living at home, but Percy and his brother Reuben were living with Eliza Johnson, their paternal grandmother, who was widowed and living close to Percy's family. The same year, Percy's sister Gertrude was a dressmaker, living with her aunt—her mother's sister, Ann Taylor—who was also a dressmaker.¹¹ In 1911, four children were at home, but Percy was not there.

Percy probably immigrated to Canada in 1911—leaving from Liverpool and arriving in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on 25 March 1911. The British Bonus, paid to steamship booking agents in the UK and European countries for each suitable immigrant who purchased a ticket to sail to Canada,¹² was paid for Percy. He intended to go to Kingston, Ontario, as a farmer and clearly intended to stay in Canada.¹³

The Great War broke out on 4 August 1914 and Percy did not hesitate to join the Canadian Expeditionary Force in order to return to England and join the fight. When he enlisted in Valcartier, Quebec, on 25 September 1914, he was a carpenter, 5'3" tall and had a dark complexion, grey eyes and dark brown hair.¹⁴ His Canadian address was not known, but his next-of-kin was his father in Mareham-le-Fen.

His service file does not indicate when he went to England and then France but, by 1 April 1915, he was on a nominal roll in France. He was with the 10th Canadian Battalion on 1 October 1915 when he was admitted to No 2 Canadian Field Ambulance. Two days later he was diagnosed with severe enteric fever (now known as typhoid fever). Just over a week later, he was pronounced as "seriously ill," which may mean that his family was notified of his illness. Four days later he was at a Canadian Red Cross hospital and diagnosed with hepatitis. He was sent back to England on the hospital ship *SS St David* and may have been sent to the Canadian Red Cross Hospital in Taplow, Buckinghamshire. On 21 December 1915, he was discharged from Hillingdon House Convalescent Uxbridge and returned to a reserve unit.

In February 1916, Percy was granted permission to marry, but no evidence was found to substantiate that Percy did marry.

Percy was hospitalized again in England, with “disorderly heart action, tachocardia [*sic*], thrill, systolic roughness, anemia.” Even though this is serious diagnosis, Percy survived. He remained in England for quite a while, attached to a variety of units in Sutcliffe, West Sandling and Bramshott until August 1917, when he was transferred back to the 10th Battalion in France, arriving on 10 September. On 3 January 1918, he was sent to school in the field for a month, after which he appears to have served for a short time as a batman to the Assistant Provost Marshal—the head of the military police in Arras, in northern France.

He returned to his unit in the field in May and in mid-September was given two-weeks leave in the UK. He returned to his unit in early October and less than two weeks later, he developed “pyrexia of unknown origin” (fever).¹⁵ According to No. 1 CCCS chaplains’ journal, he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station¹⁶ on 10 October and died three days later of pneumonia.¹⁷

Percy was buried on 15 October in the Duisans British Military Cemetery (Plot 7, Row B, Grave 86) with the Canadian chaplain W. Fisher presiding. The cemetery is located in Étrun, near Arras, France. The first burials in the cemetery took place in March 1917.¹⁸ No. 1 CCCS arrived in Duisans 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.¹⁹

Percy had survived two serious illnesses—enteric fever in 1915 and a heart condition in 1917—but he continued to serve until late 1918. His father was notified of his son’s death and probably received a letter from the chaplain. He requested the following inscription for his gravestone:

DEARLY BELOVED SON
OF HENRY AND ROSE JOHNSON
AT REST²⁰

Percy is remembered on the Mareham-le-Fen war memorial.²¹

Not only was Percy 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), he also received the Military Medal. It is not known what actions on his part led to this award, but it was reported in *The London Gazette* on 11 February 1919.²²

Mareham-le-Fen War Memorial
Source: *Roll of Honour*



SUPPLEMENT TO THE LONDON GAZETTE, 11 FEBRUARY, 1919.

His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the Military Medal for bravery in the Field to the under-mentioned Warrant Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men:—

19736 Pte. Johnson, P., 10th Bn., Alberta R.

It is not known if Percy's older brother Reuben served in the Great War but, if he did, he survived. Unfortunately, his younger brother did not, although he did not die during the hostilities.

Percy was a private with the Lincolnshire Regiment (regimental number: 12925) and the Royal Berkshire Regiment (regimental number: 36916). He enlisted early in the war and went to France on 14 July 1915.²³ He suffered a wrist injury in August 1915 and was taken to a Norwich convalescent home. Unfortunately, the wound opened up and he had to be operated on again to have splintered bone removed.²⁴ He returned to the Front, but was discharged on 27 March 1918 with a disability.

He had a difficult life after the end of his war. he was bedridden almost all the four and a half years after his discharge. He died on 27 October 1922²⁵ and his funeral took place at St Helen's church in Mareham-le-Fen the following Monday. It was a military funeral with many of his former comrades and a Victory Band in attendance.²⁶ After his funeral, his parents posted, in the local newspaper, a note of thanks to:

...all their friends and neighbors far and near for their untiring kindness and sympathy of the past four years. They also wish to thank all the ex-Servicemen who paid their last tribute of respect to their old comrade, Wilfred H. Johnson.²⁷

The year after Wilfred's death, his father died. Henry died on 18 March 1923, at the age of 73. He

... expired somewhat suddenly on Sunday morning, has been in failing health for some considerable time. A native of the village, Mr. Johnson was held in high esteem by all in the district. He was a well-known figure at the local markets, having carried on business of a butcher for a long time. He was an enthusiastic Methodist, and for a number of years was an energetic worker in the Wesleyan Church, particularly among the young people.²⁸

Henry's wife was 11 years younger than her husband and she lived for 28 years as his widow. Rose died on 18 September 1951, just after her 90th birthday.²⁹ Three days earlier she posted a notice in the newspaper to thank "... her many friends for the lovely flowers, letters and good wishes she received on her 90th birthday. She spent a very happy day."³⁰

Henry, Rose and Wilfrid were all interred together in the Mareham-le-Fen cemetery.³¹



Gravestone for Henry, Rose and Wilfrid Johnson

Source: UK and Ireland, Find a Grave Index, 1300s-Current

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
HENRY JOHNSON
WHO DIED MARCH 18TH 1923
AGED 73 YEARS
ALSO OF
ROSE JOHNSON
WHO DIED SEPTEMBER 18TH 1951
AGED 90 YEARS
ALSO OF
WILFRID HENRY
THIRD SON OF THE ABOVE
WHO DIED FOR HIS COUNTRY
OCTOBER 31ST 1922
AGED 29 YEARS
GREATLY MISSED AND NEVER
FORGOTTEN

After the death of his father, only four of Percy's siblings were still alive. His youngest sister Mable had died during the war. She died on 24 January 1917 in Mareham-le-Fen at the age of 21.³²

Percy's eldest two sisters, Gertrude and Florence, both became nurses. In 1901, **Gertrude** was a dressmaker and living with her aunt and maternal grandmother in Lincoln.³³ Ten years later, she was a trained nurse in the home of the Ward family in Boston.³⁴ In 1939, she was living with her mother on Main Road in Horncastle—

about 10 kilometres from Mareham-le-Fen—and is still identified as a trained nurse.³⁵ She died on 20 February 1978 at the Russell Green Nursing Home in Woodhill Spa, Lincolnshire.³⁶

In 1911, **Florence** was a nurse in the home of Arthur Johnson and his family, living at Woodlands, Parsonage Lane, in Bishop's Stortford.³⁷ About the time that her brother, Wilfred, died, Florence married Titus Kime in Horncastle.³⁸ Sadly, Titus died on 6 December 1931 and eight years later, Florence was a widow also living on Main Road in Horncastle.³⁹ Florence outlived her husband by over 40 years—she died in Mareham-le-Fen on 10 August 1972.⁴⁰

Percy's brother **Reuben** married during the war⁴¹ and he and his wife, the former Rose Hodgson, were living at The Firs in Mareham-le-Fen in 1926.⁴² Reuben was a farmer and, in 1939, was living in Horncastle.⁴³ He died on 25 January 1978 in Boston.⁴⁴

Little is known about the life of Percy's sister **Ethel**. She married Harry Richards on 14 June 1924 at St Helen's Church in Mareham-le-Fen.⁴⁵ Harry was from Nottinghamshire, but it is not known where he and Ethel lived after their marriage.

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¹ "Personnel Records of the First World War," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/>; accessed 28 January 2022) entry for Johnson, Percy, Reference: RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 4893 - 45, Item number: 337480, Digitized service file - PDF format: B4893-S045. Unless otherwise note, all information about Percy's military service came from this source.

² "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 14 February 2022), entry for Rose Johnson, Schedule number: 123, Sub-schedule Number: 2, Enumeration district: TNKE, Registration district: 419-2

³ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 27 January 2022), entry for Desser [sic] Johnson, Registration district: Horncastle, Sub registration district: Tattershall, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 5, Piece: 2600, Folio: 60

⁴ Lincolnshire Chronicle, 11 May 1883

⁵ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 February 2022), entry for Gertrude Sarah Johnson, Schedule number: 123, Sub-schedule Number: 2, Enumeration district: TNKE, Registration district: 419-2

⁶ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 February 2022), entry for Florence Emily Kime, Schedule number: 46, Sub-schedule Number: 1, Enumeration district: TNKE, Borough: Horncastle, Registration district: 419-2

⁷ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 13 February 2022), entry for Reuben Johnson, Schedule number: 11, Sub-schedule Number: 1, Enumeration district: TNKP, Borough: Horncastle, Registration district: 419-2

⁸ "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 January 2022) entry for Johnson, Ethel Mary, Registration district: Horncastle, Volume 07A, Page 545

⁹ "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 January 2022) entry for Johnson, Wilfred Henry, Registration district: Horncastle, Volume 07A, Page 561

¹⁰ "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 January 2022) entry for Johnson, Mabel Annie, Registration district: Horncastle, Volume 07A, Page 542

¹¹ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2022), entry for Gertrude S. Johnson, Registration district: Lincoln, Sub-registration district: Lincoln Home, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 31, Piece: 3062, Folio: 134, Page: 7, Household schedule number: 42; "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 January 2022) entry for Taylor, Rose, Mother's maiden name: Marshall, Registration district: Newark, Volume 07B, Page 286; "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 29 January 2022) entry for Taylor, Rose, Mother's maiden name: Marshall, Registration district: Lincoln, Volume 07A, Page 483

¹² "Manifest Markings: What was "British Bonus Allowed" on Canadian Passenger Lists?," *Olive Tree Genealogy* (<https://olivetreegenealogy.blogspot.com/2014/11/manifest-markings-what-was-british.html>: accessed 30 January 2022)

¹³ "Canada, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1865-1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 January 2022), entry for Percy Johnson

¹⁴ CEF Unless otherwise mentioned, all information about Percy's military service comes from this source.

¹⁵ Percy's service file suggests that he was admitted to No. 23 Casualty Clearing Station, but the No. 1 CCCS chaplains' journal indicates that he was admitted there on 10 October.

¹⁶ A very comprehensive description of the casualty clearing stations is presented in the blog "Casualty Clearing Stations During WW1" *Chiddicks Family Tree* (<https://chiddicksfamilytree.com/2021/05/09/casualty-clearing-stations-during-ww1/>: accessed 13 May 2021)

¹⁷ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 14 February 2022), entry for Johnson, P

¹⁸ "Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org; accessed 7 October 2015)

¹⁹ "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)

²⁰ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 14 February 2022), entry for Johnson, Percy

²¹ "Marcham le Fen memorial," *Roll of Honour* (<https://www.roll-of-honour.com/Lincolnshire/MarehamLeFen.html>: accessed 2 February 2022), photograph copyright © Michael Peck 2007

²² "Supplement to the London Gazette, 11 February 1919," *The Gazette* (<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/>: accessed 14 February 2022)

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- ²³ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 February 2020), entry for Wilfred H. Johnson
- ²⁴ "Mareham-le-Fen Lad's Wounds," British newspapers, *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 14 February 2022), *Boston Guardian*, 4 March 1916
- ²⁵ "UK and Ireland, Find A Grave Index, 1300s-Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 February 2022), entry for Wilfred Henry Johnson
- ²⁶ "Mareham-le-Fen," British newspapers, *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 14 February 2022), *Lincolnshire Standard and Boston Guardian*, 4 November 1922
- ²⁷ British newspapers, *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 14 February 2022), *Skegness Standard*, 8 November 1922
- ²⁸ "Obituary," British newspapers, *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 14 February 2022), *The Boston Guardian*, Saturday, March 24, 1923
- ²⁹ "Birth, marriages and deaths," British newspapers, *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 14 February 2022), *Lincolnshire Standard and Boston Guardian*, 15 September 1951
- ³⁰ "Mareham-le-Fen," British newspapers, *Stamford Mercury*, 28th September 1951 *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 14 February 2022),
- ³¹ "UK and Ireland, Find A Grave Index, 1300s-Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 February 2022), entry for Wilfred Henry Johnson
- ³² "Lincolnshire Monumental Inscriptions," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 30 January 2022), entry for Mabel A Johnson
- ³³ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2022), entry for Gertrude S. Johnson, Registration district: Lincoln, Sub-registration district: Lincoln Home, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 31, Piece: 3062, Folio: 134, Page: 7, Household schedule number: 42
- ³⁴ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2022), entry for Gertrude Sarah Johnson, Registration district number: 415, Sub-registration district: Benington, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 14, Piece: 19583
- ³⁵ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry*, entry for Gertrude Sarah Johnson
- ³⁶ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 December 2022), entry for Gertrude Sarah Johnson
- ³⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 February 2022), entry for Florence Emily Johnson, Registration district number: 134, Sub-registration district: Stortford, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 01, Piece: 7492. No evidence was found to suggest that this Johnson family was related to Percy's family.
- ³⁸ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2020), entry for Florence E Johnson, Registration district: Horncastle, Inferred county: Lincolnshire, Volume: 7a, Page: 1281
- ³⁹ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry*, entry for Florence Emily Kime,
- ⁴⁰ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 February 2022), entry for Florence Emily Kime
- ⁴¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2020), entry for Reuben Johnson, Registration district: Horncastle, Inferred county: Lincolnshire, Volume: 7a, Page: 1135
- ⁴² "UK, City and County Directories, 1766 – 1946," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 13 February 2020), entry for Reuben Johnson
- ⁴³ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry*, entry for Reuben Johnson
- ⁴⁴ "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 13 February 2022), entry for Reuben Johnson

⁴⁵ "Mareham-le-Fen," British newspapers, *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 14 February 2022), *Lincolnshire Standard and Boston Guardian*, 21 June 1924