

Private George Edwin Osborne[©]

Regimental Number: 24589

3rd Battalion, Machine Gun Corps

born: 1895 - died: 19 May 1918

George Edwin Osborne, son of George and Mary Osborne, was born in the spring of 1895 in West Ham, Essex.¹ He came from a large family with eight siblings—Ida May (born 1896), Frank William (born 1898), Thomas Leonard (born 1899), Albert Victor (born 1901), Ernest William (born 1902), Edith Flora (1903), Ralph Leslie (born 1906) and Stanley Walter Neil (born 1910).² Four other siblings had died. By the age of 15, George was already working as a milk carrier, possibly with his father, and living with his family at 199 Brookscroft Rd, Highams Park, Walthamstow.³

George enlisted in Stratford, Essex sometime before December 1915.⁴ He served first with the Essex Regiment (Serial No: 2147) and then was a Private in the 3rd Battalion of the Machine Gun Corps (Serial No: 24589).⁵ He went to France on 1 June 1915.

In 1915, machine gun sections had been removed from infantry battalions overseas and formed into machine gun companies, one of which was attached to each brigade. In 1918, four companies were formed into a machine gun battalion and one machine gun battalion was attached to each division.⁶ It is possible that George took part in the Second Battle of the Somme.



Machine Gun Corps

Source: www.vickersmachinegun.org.uk

George was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 18 May 1918



Gravestone G. E. Osborne in Pernes Cemetery

Source: Author, July 2015

with a shrapnel wound penetrating his back. He lived until the next day. He was just 23 years old when he died on 19 May. He was a member of the Church of England and the chaplain presiding at his burial the next day was J. K. Tibbits. He was buried in the Pernes British Military Cemetery (Grave 3, Plot 1, Row F). His mother, who was then living at 199 Fulbourne Rd., Walthamstow, Essex, was notified of his death.⁷ The money owing to him after his death (about £25) was sent to his father.

On 18 May, 199 soldiers were admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, bringing the total number of patients to 376.⁸ In the whole month of May, there were 115 deaths at this CCCS – more than in any of the other three and a half months that No. 1 CCCS was in Pernes. The Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when the 1st and 4th CCCS came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.⁹

George was awarded the British 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).¹⁰

George's younger brother, Frank, followed in his brother's footsteps. He volunteered in April 1916 at the age of 18 (although he may have served sometime in 1915). His service began in October 1916 and ended with the end of hostilities. He began as a "Boy II" and, at the end of his service, was a telegraph messenger (Service No. J37414). He appears to have served primarily in shore establishments (such as the HMS Impregnable training establishment and the Culver Cliff coastal artillery battery). He was discharged in July 1919¹¹ and awarded the British and Victory medals.¹²

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¹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 May 2014), entry for George Edwin Osborne, Registration district: West Ham, Inferred County: Essex, Volume: 4a, Page: 389

² "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 May 2014), entry for George Edwin Osborne, Registration district: West Ham, Registration District Number: 188, Sub-registration district: Walthamstow, ED, institution, or vessel: 59, Household schedule number: 313, Piece: 9733

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ He must have enlisted before that date because he was eligible for the 1914–15 Star for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915.

⁵ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 May 2014), entry for George Edwin Osborne

⁶ "The Vicker's Machine Gun," (<http://www.vickersmachinegun.org.uk/units-mgc-i.htm#sthash.sBku60Wr.dpuf>: accessed 2 September 2014)

⁷ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916–10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Library and Archives Canada, (records accessed 2013 & 2014), Record Group 9, series IIIC10, volume 4556, Record number 499

⁸ "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/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FIN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 15 December 2014)

⁹ "Pernes British Military Cemetery" *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 13 January 2015)

¹⁰ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2014), entry for George E. Osborne

¹¹ "Royal Navy Seamen 1899–1919," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 2 September 2014), entry for Frank William Osborne

¹² "UK, Naval Medal and Award Rolls, 1793–1972," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 2 September 2014), entry for Frank Osborne