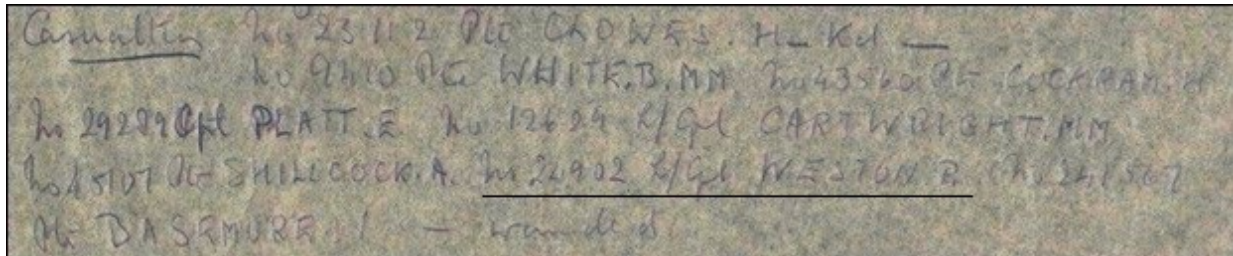


Private Percy Weston®
Regimental number: 24902
7th Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment

born: 1893–died: 9 October 1918

Private Percy Weston's death was recorded by the chaplains at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station as having occurred on 9 October 1918—he is shown as having been admitted on 8 October, dying the next day and being buried on 10 October.¹ Yet a number of the military records that reflect a soldier's date of death indicate that he died on 7 October.² Nonetheless, it would appear that, based on his battalion's war diaries, the chaplain was right.

Percy was wounded on 8 October. He was one of eight casualties—one killed and seven injured—among the Other Ranks in his battalion that happened after repulsing an attack by 200 enemy soldiers. Unusually, but fortuitously, Percy's name is recorded in the battalion's war diaries as one of the wounded.³



Extract from war diary of 7th Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment

Source: Ancestry

Percy was admitted to No. 1 CCCS with wounds to his right arm, back and abdomen caused by a bomb. He was buried in Duisans British Military Cemetery (Plot 7, Row A, Grave 46) with the Canadian chaplain W. Fisher presiding. Duisans British Military Cemetery is located in Étrun, near Arras, France. The first burials in the cemetery took place in March 1917.⁴

His mother, who was living at 157 Wolverton Road in Leicester, was his next of kin and notified of his death.⁵

His parents, John and Mary Maria (née Jordan), were both from Leicestershire—John was born in about 1853 in Stanton under Bardon and Mary Maria about four years later in Ratby.⁶ They were married in 1876 in Leicester and had nine children—six of whom survived childhood:

- Ellen Louisa (also known as Nellie) (born in 1876)⁷
- Mary Elizabeth (born on 13 February 1878)⁸
- Edith May (born on 16 May 1881)⁹
- Alfred (born on 27 September 1888)¹⁰
- Percy (born in 1893)¹¹
- Gertrude (born in 1896)¹²

Three children died in childhood—John Henry (born in 1879 and died at the age of 1)¹³ and Mary Ann (born in 1883 and died within a few months)¹⁴ and John Harold (born in 1886 and died the following year).¹⁵

In 1881, John and Mary Maria were living at 61 Catesby Street in Leicester, where John was a baker.¹⁶ Ten years later, the family was living at 18 Jewry Wall Street in (or probably above) a bakery shop. Their two eldest children, Nellie and Elizabeth, were both working—Nellie as a wool sorter and Elizabeth as a shoe fitter.¹⁷

In 1901, the family was living a few blocks away from the old bakery at 90 Vaughan Street. John was now a journeyman baker, which means that he was working for somebody else.¹⁸ By 1911 John had changed jobs and was a rubber hand working for a cycle tire manufacturer and the family was living at 157 Wolverton Road in Leicester. Percy, at the age of 17, was doing the same job as his father.¹⁹

In spite of his age, by 1911, Percy has already had two children with Florence Evalina Steadman—Percy Weston Steadman was born 9 February 1910²⁰ and Robert John Steadman in 1911.²¹ Sadly, Robert died soon after birth.²² In 1911, Percy's son was living with his mother, who was working for a chocolate manufacturer, and her parents at Ivy Cottage, St Mary's Fields on Narborough Road in Leicester, just a few blocks from the Westons.²³ Percy was required to pay child support which, after Robert's death, amounted to 2s 6d a week. While he accepted his responsibility, he was not able to keep up the payments and, in November 1911, when the boy's mother took him to court, he was 18s in arrears. Percy's court appearance was reported in the local newspaper:

Defendant said he could not possibly pay the money. His employer appeared, and stated that the lad was only earning about 8s. 7d. per week, and he had been paying 2s a week. His father was a chronic invalid. — Applicant said she was earning about 12 s. a week. — Defendant offered to pay 5s. down, and he was ordered to pay to 2s 6d a week.²⁴

Percy's death would be announced in the same newspaper just under seven years later.²⁵

Percy enlisted in about September 1915 and joined the 7th Battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment.²⁶ In early October 1918, the battalion was stationed at Abancourt, about 45 kilometres southwest of Amiens in northern France. The battalion relieved the 5th Canadian Infantry Battalion on 2 October. There were casualties most days early in the month but, on 6 October the following message was communicated to the men of the battalion "The BGC [Brigadier-General Commanding] wishes me to say that he ... the successful operation carried out last night reflects great credit on you and your battalion."²⁷ Percy would likely have been aware of these encouraging words.

Pte. P. Weston, South Staffs, died of wounds 8th Oct., in France. Mother resides at 157, Wolverton-road.

Source: "Roll of Honour," *FindmyPast*, 22 October 1918

Percy was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational

theatre).²⁸ His sister Mary asked to have the following inscription included on his gravestone:

SUNSHINE PASSES
SHADOWS FALL
BUT LOVING MEMORIES
OUTLIVE ALL²⁹

Percy's father died during the war and his mother a few years after its end—his father in 1917³⁰ and his mother in 1923.³¹

No information was found about the life of Percy's eldest sister, **Nellie**. The second eldest sister, **Mary**, was living at 157 Wolverton Road, the family home, in 1939. In 1911, she had been working as a hosiery hand in a glove manufacture. Hosiery, particularly woolen hosiery, was a staple industry in Leicester in the mid-19th century. It continued well into the 20th century³² and would support members of Percy's family for many years. In 1939, Mary was a flat locker hosiery machinist and Esther Harris, also a hosiery machinist was living with them.³³ Esther was the sister of Mary's sister Edith's husband.³⁴ Mary died on 6 March 1966 in Leicester and the executor for her estate was Esther's nephew John Harris.³⁵

Nellie and Mary's sister, **Edith**, also worked in the hosiery industry. In 1901, she was a hosiery hand linker.³⁶ Two years later she married Richard Harris³⁷ and, in 1939, she was still a hosiery machinist and she and Richard were living at 242 Western Road in Leicester. Their son, John Richard, born on 23 August 1912, was living with them and he too was a hosiery machinist.³⁸ She Edith died in Leicester in 1972.³⁹

Percy's only brother, **Alfred**, also served in the military during the Great War. He was a gunner (regimental number: 175761) in the Royal Garrison Artillery. It is not known when he enlisted, but he was discharged on 24 February 1919 with a disability. He was suffering from neurasthenia—probably was also known as shell shock.⁴⁰ Like his brother, Alfred was awarded the British War and Victory Medals.⁴¹

Alfred married Frances E. Rimmington in 1912⁴² and, after the war, was living at 246 Western Road⁴³—the same street as his sister Edith. In 1939, he and Frances were living at 47 Ivy Road, where Alfred was working as a dairy worker.⁴⁴ He probably died in 1955.⁴⁵

It is likely that Percy's youngest sibling, **Gertrude**, died in 1912 at the age of 16—probably just months after Alfred's marriage.⁴⁶

Percy's son was living with his mother and grandmother in 1939 at 115 Jarrom Street in Leicester and was a tinner of milk cans working for dairy engineers.⁴⁷ His mother died on 25 November 1962⁴⁸ and Percy himself died on 8 February 1983.⁴⁹

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³ "UK, World War I War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 April 2021), Regiment or unit: South Staffordshire Regiment, Sub-unit: 7th Service Battalion, Division: 11th Division, Piece description: Piece 1816/1-4: 7 Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment (1916 Jul - 1919 May), Piece number: 1816

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