

Rifleman George Edward Byrch

Regimental Number: 32776

3rd Battalion, Rifle Brigade

born: 29 June 1875 - died: 23 May 1918

George Edward Byrch, born on 29 June 1875 in Chelsea, London,¹ was the second child of John and Rosina Byrch.² The couple's first child was a daughter, Amy Elizabeth, born five years earlier. Both children were baptised in the Parish of St Marylebone. When Ann was baptised in 1870 the family was living at 34 North Street.³ Ten years later, when George was baptised, the family was living at 106 High Street, London and John was a licensed victualler's potman.⁴

Unfortunately, John died early in 1887, just before George's twelfth birthday.⁵ Three years later, George's mother and his sister, Amy, were living with Rosina's nephew, Thomas Sandiland, and his family at 30 Bullow Road, Fulham.⁶ Rosina was working as a needlewoman. No information has been found to indicate where George was then.

At the beginning of 1905, George married Emma Eliza in Hackney.⁷ They had two children: Hilda Emma (born in 1908)⁸ and Stanley E. (born in 1910).⁹ In 1911, George was working as a laundry carman and the family was living in three-room house at 24 Detmold Road in Upper Clapton.¹⁰ They continued to live at that address until at least 1915.¹¹

George enlisted in Hackney and initially served in the 13th Battalion of the Rifle Brigade and later in the 3rd Battalion. He was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 20 May 1918 with gun shot wounds to the face, left arm, back and right leg. He survived for three days, dying only on 23 May. He was buried the following day in the Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row C, Grave 12), Pas de Calais, with J. K. Tibbits, chaplain, presiding. George was a member of the Church of England. His wife, who was then living at 8 High St., Homerton, was notified of his death.¹² She received the money the army owed him after his death.¹³

On 20 May, 370 soldiers were admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station – by far the highest number of admissions in any one day that month.¹⁴ This brought the total number of patients to 522. 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 the 1st CCCS was in Pernes. The Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when the 1st and 4th Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.¹⁵

George was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).¹⁶

George was 43 when he died. It appears that his wife died just eight years later in Hackney in 1926, also at the age of 43.¹⁷ She left two children, aged 16 and 18. Hilda continued to live in the Hackney area and married Joseph O. Tulley in 1939.¹⁸ Stanley moved to Warwickshire and married Elsie Ward in Coventry in 1940.¹⁹

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- ¹ "London, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2015), entry for George Edward Byrch
- ² "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 2 January 2015), entry for John Clark, Registration district: Chelsea, Sub-registration district: Chelsea South, ED, institution, or vessel: 19, Piece: 79, Folio: 33, Page Number: 1
- ³ "London, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2015), entry for Amy Elizabeth Byrch
- ⁴ "London, England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1906," entry for George Edward Byrch
- ⁵ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2015), entry for John Byrch, Registration district: Fulham, County: London, Volume: 1a, Page: 215
- ⁶ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2015), entry for Rosina Byrch, Registration district: Fulham, Sub-registration district: Fulham, ED, institution, or vessel: 43, Piece: 52, Folio: 83, Page Number: 49
- ⁷ "England & Wales marriages 1837-2008," *findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk, accessed 5 January 2015), entry for George Edward Byrch, District: Hackney, County: London, Volume: 1B, Page: 546. It is not certain what Emma Eliza's family name was.
- ⁸ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 December 2014), entry for Hilda Emma Byrch, Registration district: Hackney, Inferred County: London, Volume: 1b, Page: 395
- ⁹ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 December 2014), entry for Stanley E. Byrch, Registration district: Hackney, Inferred County: London, Volume: 1b, Page: 358
- ¹⁰ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2015), entry for George Edward Byrch, Registration district: Hackney, Registration District Number: 11, Sub-registration district: North Hackney, ED, institution, or vessel: 5, Piece: 1038
- ¹¹ "London, England, Electoral Registers, 1832-1965," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2015), entry for George Edward Byrch (1913 - 1915)
- ¹² "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 IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 515
- ¹³ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 January 2015), entry for George Edward Byrch
- ¹⁴ "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=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 15 December 2014)
- ¹⁵ "Pernes British Military Cemetery" *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 13 January 2015)
- ¹⁶ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2014), entry for George Edward Byrch
- ¹⁷ "England & Wales deaths 1837-2007," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2015), entry for Emma Byrch, District: Marylebone, County: London, Volume: 1B, Page: 543
- ¹⁸ "England & Wales, Marriage Index, 1916-2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2015), entry for Hilda E. Byrch, Registration district: Hackney, Inferred County: London, Volume Number: 1b, Page Number: 1467
- ¹⁹ "England & Wales, Marriage Index, 1916-2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2015), entry for Stanley E. Byrch, Registration district: Coventry, Inferred County: Warwickshire, Volume Number: 6d, Page Number: 2550