

Gunner Peter Blundell

Regimental Number: 279851

46th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery

born: 1879 - died: 16 November 1918

Gunner Peter Blundell, born in September 1879,¹ was the son of Thomas W. and Harriet Blundell, both of Bolton, Lancashire.² Peter was the last of seven children. He had three brothers: John H. (born about 1862), Frederick (born about 1870) and Joseph (born about 1872) and three sisters: Elizabeth A. (born about 1866), Sarah E. (born about 1868) and Alice (born about 1876).³

Peter lived in Haydock, near St Helen's, Lancashire all his life. On 9 February 1901, he married Maggie Howarth Hodgson, born in Liverpool.⁴ They married at St Thomas Church in Ashton in Makerfield. A few months later, he and Maggie were visitors in the home of John and Elizabeth Cross in Haydock.⁵ Both Peter and John Cross were coal miners (hewers). Over the next twelve years, Peter and Maggie had six children – four daughters: Alice (born in 1902), Annie (born in 1906), Lydia (born in 1908) and Lillian (born in 1910); and two sons: Harold (born in 1904) and Peter (born in 1913).⁶ In 1911, the family was living at 33 Vista Road, Haydock.⁷

When Peter enlisted in the Royal Garrison Artillery on 11 October 1915, he had just turned 36. He was 5'7". Prior to enlisting in the RGA had served in the Lancashire Hussars. On 6 November 1915, he was posted to the 46th Siege Battery and was subsequently posted to the British Expeditionary Force on 4 December 1916. On 7 January 1917, he was attached to the 252nd Tunnelling Company. The first Tunnelling Companies had been set up in February 1915 to mine under enemy lines to blow them up.⁸ Men with mining experience were particularly valuable. However, when Peter died, he was with the 46th Siege Battery. "The Siege Batteries were most often employed in destroying or neutralising the enemy artillery, as well as putting destructive fire down on strongpoints, dumps, store, roads and railways behind enemy lines."⁹



St Helens Roll of Honour¹⁰

Peter was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 10 November 1918 with bronchitis.¹¹ He died there six days later and was buried the same day the British Military Cemetery in Auberchicourt (Plot 1, Row A, Grave 17). The chaplain, W. O'Neill Fisher, from the Canadian Forces, presided over the burial and notified his wife of his death. The monies owing to him by the army were also sent to his wife.

The day that Peter was admitted to the 1st CCCS, the unit's war diaries recorded that "Cases [were] being received continuously."¹² The following day the Armistice was signed but injured soldiers continue to arrive. "Receiving steadily and overflowing into neighbouring buildings. Very busy. Many Flu



P Blundell in Auberchicourt Cemetery
(Source: Author)

cases and Broncho Pneumonia. The war was not over so far as we were concerned. On patient claimed to be wounded at 11.10 A.M." Sixty-seven people (soldiers and civilians) died at the 1st CCCS in November 1918. The work of the Centre had shifted from being primarily surgical to medical, to deal with the cases of bronchitis and influenza.

Auberchicourt, a village about 12 kilometres to the east of Douai, was occupied by Commonwealth troops in October 1918.¹³ The Auberchicourt British Cemetery, which is just west of the village, was set up at the end of October and was used until February 1919 while the 6th, 23rd and 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations were located nearby.

Peter was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).¹⁴

© BIFHSGO 2015

¹ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 March 2015), entry for Peter Blundell, Form title: Short Service Attestation

² "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2015), entry for Peter Blundell, Registration district: Warrington, Sub-registration district: Newton in Makerfield, ED, institution, or vessel: 8, Piece: 2788, Folio: 27, Page Number: 47

³ "1871 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 March 2015), entry for Thomas Blundell, Registration district: Nantwich, Sub-registration district: Nantwich, ED, institution, or vessel: 5, Household schedule number: 16, Piece: 3712, Folio: 63, Page Number: 10; "1881 England Census," entry for Peter Blundell

⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 December 2015), entry for Peter Blundell, Registration district: Wigan, Inferred County: Lancashire, Volume: 8c, Page: 9

⁵ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2015), entry for Bruno Whittle, Registration district: Warrington, Sub-registration district: Newton in Makerfield, ED, institution, or vessel: 3, Piece: 3573, Folio: 59, Page Number: 14, Household schedule number: 81

⁶ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920," entry for Peter Blundell

⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2015), entry for Bruno Whittle, Registration district: Warrington, Registration District Number: 459, Sub-registration district: Newton in Makerfield, ED, institution, or vessel: 2 Piece: 23103

⁸ "The Tunnelling Companies RE," *The Long, Long Trail: The British Army of 1914-1918 - for family historians*, (<http://www.1914-1918.net/tunnelcoyre.htm>; accessed 18 March 2015)

⁹ "The Long, Long Trail: The Siege Batteries of the Royal Garrison Artillery," (<http://www.1914-1918.net/cra.htm>: accessed 3 February 2014)

¹⁰ "Gunner 279851 Peter Blundell," *St Helens Roll of Honour* (<http://www.sthelensrollsofhonour.co.uk/casualty-2768-Peter-Blundell.html>; accessed 18 March 2015) Photograph posted with the kind permission of the website.

¹¹ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Library and Archives Canada, (records accessed 2013 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 716

¹² "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)

¹³ "Auberchicourt British Cemetery," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/59509/AUBERCHICOURT%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>: accessed 3 February 2015)

¹⁴ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2015), entry for Harry Reuben Knight
