

Private Reginald Careless **Regimental number: 19120** **9th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment**

born: 1899 - died: 1 July 1918

Private Reginald Careless was the son of John and Elizabeth Careless of Tunbridge Wells, Kent.¹ His father, John, was born in about 1875 in Trumpington, Cambridgeshire,² and his mother, Elizabeth (the former Elizabeth Catherine Williams), was born in 1863/64, in either Chester or Shropshire.³ Reginald was their eldest child. He was born in the summer of 1899⁴ and baptised in Tunbridge Wells on 9 July.⁵ There followed two more sons: Frederick, born in about 1902, and Frank, born in about 1907.⁶ In 1911, the family was living at Gardener Cottage, 31 Ferndale, Tunbridge Wells, where John was a domestic gardener.

The chaplains' journal from the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station indicates that Reginald served with the 7th Northamptonshire Regiment.⁷ However, other military records suggest that, in fact, he first served with the Royal Fusiliers and later in the 9th Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment.⁸ The 9th Battalion landed at Boulogne, France on 31 August 1915.⁹ It continued to serve on the Western Front until the Armistice and was disbanded in early 1919.



R. Careless in Pernes British Military Cemetery
(Source: Author, July 2015)

Evidence was not found to identify when Reginald joined the Battalion, but he was not theoretically old enough to enlist until the summer of 1917, or to go overseas until the summer of 1918. However, on 19 June 1918, he was admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with gun shot wounds to the chest. He survived for eleven days, but died on 1 July at the age of just 19.¹⁰ He was buried the following day in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 5. Row D. Grave No. 6) with the chaplain J. K. Tibbits presiding. He was identified as a member of the Church of England.

The day that Reginald was admitted to the 1st CCCS, there were 332 admissions – the highest number of admissions in one day in the whole month of June.¹¹ Most of the over 1,000 First World War soldiers buried in the Pernes British Military Cemetery died at one of the nearby clearing stations.¹² This 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.

Reginald's mother was notified of his death and she received the monies owing to him by the army after his death.¹³ Reginald was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).¹⁴

Reginald's death was the second tragedy of this war for his mother. Reginald's father, John, had died two years earlier. Private John Careless enlisted with the 1st Battalion of the Queen's Own (Royal West Kent) Regiment in December 1914. He went to France on 13 May 1915 and was reported missing just over a year later and is presumed to have died on 22 July 1916. He is honoured on the

Thiepval Memorial in the Somme, France. John was awarded 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).¹⁵

Both father and son are honoured on the Tunbridge Wells War Memorial¹⁶ and on a plaque at St James Church, Tunbridge Wells.¹⁷ Reginald's mother died in 1925 and was buried in Tunbridge Wells Borough Cemetery on 22 December.¹⁸

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¹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 5 January 2015), entry for Reginald Careless, Registration district: Tonbridge, Registration District Number: 50, Sub-registration district: Tunbridge Wells, ED, institution, or vessel: 20, Household schedule number: 382, Piece: 4059

² *Ibid.*

³ The 1911 census gives her place of birth as Chester. However, the 1901 census indicated that she was born in Shropshire. "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 11 January 2015), entry for Reginald Careless, Registration district: Tonbridge, Sub-registration district: Tunbridge Wells, ED, institution, or vessel: 28, Piece: 755, Folio: 120, Page Number: 25, Household schedule number: 164

⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 16 April 2015), entry for Reginald Careless, Registration district: Tonbridge, Inferred County: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 756

⁵ "England & Wales Christening Records, 1530-1906," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 16 April 2015), entry for Reginald Careless

⁶ "1911 England Census," entry for Reginald Careless

⁷ "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 607

⁸ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 16 April 2015), entry for Careless, Reginald

⁹ 9th Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment," Royal Sussex Regiment : Battalion Histories 1914-19 (<http://battlefields1418.50megs.com/9sussex.htm>; accessed 17 April 2015)

¹⁰ The 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station chaplains' journal records his death on 30 June 1918, but other military records record it as being on 1 July 1918.

¹¹ "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)

¹² "Pernes British Military Cemetery" *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/11600/PERNES%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>; accessed 13 January 2015)

¹³ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 16 April 2015), entry for Reginald Careless

¹⁴ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 16 April 2015), entry for Careless, Reginald

¹⁵ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 26 November 2015), entry for Careless, John

¹⁶ "Tunbridge Wells War Memorial," *Roll of Honour: Lest We Forget* (<http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Kent/TunbridgeWellsWW1-C.html>; accessed 16 April 2015)

¹⁷ "UK and Ireland, Find A Grave Index, 1300s-Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 26 November 2015), entry for Pvt Reginald Careless

¹⁸ "Burial register summary," Deceased Online (www.deceasedonline.com/; accessed 22 April 2015), entry for Elizabeth Catherine Careless