

Private Percy Carswell©
Regimental number: 10063
8th Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment)

born: 1876 – died: 29 June 1916

Private Percy Carswell was born in 1876 in Lyminge, Kent¹ and baptized at Saints Mary and Ethelburga Church in Lyminge on 10 December of the same year. He was the son of Charles (born in about 1836 in Elham, Kent)² and Frances (also born in Elham in about 1845) Carswell.³ Charles and Frances (nee Frances Jane Deal) married in Barham, Kent, on 19 April 1863.⁴ They had at least ten children: Mary Ann (born in 1865),⁵ Charles (born in about 1867),⁶ John (born in 1869,⁷ but died the same year),⁸ Stephen James (born in 1870),⁹ Benjamin John (born in 1873,¹⁰ but died in December of that year),¹¹ Alfred (born in 1874,¹² but died the following spring),¹³ Percy, Kate (born in 1878),¹⁴ Florence Lizzie (born in 1882)¹⁵ and Frances May (born in about 1885).¹⁶ Percy and his brothers Charles and Stephen were the only two sons to survive childhood.

Percy's father was an agricultural labourer. In 1871, Charles and Frances were living on Pound Lane in Elham with their first three children—Mary Ann, Charles and Stephen.¹⁷ Ten years later there were two more children—Percy and Katie.¹⁸ The family was living in North Lyminge, Kent.

Charles died in 1885,¹⁹ when Percy was about eight years old, and his mother remarried two years later. She married Norris Marsh (also known as Thomas) in 1887 in Elham.²⁰ Thomas Norris was born in about 1845 in Barham, Kent.²¹

In 1891, Frances was living with her new husband, who was also an agricultural labourer, in Childham Lees, Chilham, East Ashford in Kent.²² They had three children from her first marriage and four probably from her husband's first marriage living with them. The Carswell children were Kate, Florence and Frances May. The Marsh children were Henry (born in about 1874), Louisa (born in about 1877), Richard G. (born in about 1879) and Rebecca (born in about 1882). At the time, Percy was not with his parents. He was living with relatives, Edward and Marion Dodd, at 12 Burgate Lane in Canterbury, Kent.²³

In 1898, Percy married Jemima Robins in Edmonton, Middlesex.²⁴ His wife was born in 1879 in Sheffield²⁵ and baptized at All Saints Church, Brightside, York, on 2 March 1879.²⁶ Percy and Jemima had three children:²⁷ Charles Percy (born 19 May 1899),²⁸ Frances Bertha P. M. (also known as Mary) (born 28 June 1900)²⁹ and Florence (born 31 December 1903).³⁰

Although he was already married, in 1901 Percy was boarding with Henry and Clara Martin in Tonbridge, Kent, and working as a coal carman.³¹ His wife and first two children were boarding with George and Bertha Capps in Attercliffe near Sheffield. Bertha Capps was Jemima's mother, who had married George Capps in a second marriage in 1887.³² Percy's mother and stepfather were living at 24 Black Griffin Lane in Canterbury.³³

Ten years later, Percy's mother had been widowed again. Thomas died in 1901 near Canterbury so, in 1911, his mother was living with Percy's sister Frances and her husband Ernest at 39 Wincheap Street in Canterbury.³⁴ She was a laundress, taking in laundry to the home.

In 1911, Percy was incarcerated in Her Majesty's Prison in Maidstone, Kent.³⁵ In 1907, he had been sentenced to seven years of penal servitude³⁶ for assaulting a five-year-old girl.³⁷ He was released

on 29 August 1912, with the intention of being a labourer. Sadly, the fact that Percy was sentenced to penal servitude and recorded in the Habitual Criminals Register, which meant that this may not have been his first offence.³⁸

No records were found to identify where his wife was living in 1911. She and Percy may have separated when he went to prison in 1907, because he indicated on his army attestation form in 1915 that he was not married.³⁹

Percy enlisted, at the age of 37, in the Royal West Kent Regiment in Chatham, Kent, on 2 October 1915.⁴⁰ He gave his address as that of his mother—16 Seymour Street in Canterbury. He was 5' 2½" tall and a fitter. He served first with the 9th Battalion and then transferred to the 8th Battalion and went overseas on 23 March 1916. Just before he went overseas he had a disciplinary incident. On 5 March 1916, he overstayed a pass from "m.n. until 7.15 a.m. 6th inst."⁴¹ His punishment was only an admonition.

In June 1916, the 8th Battalion was on the Front, near Dranouter in northern France.⁴² The battalion's sector was heavily bombarded by the enemy in retaliation for gas released the previous day. There were 40 casualties—Percy may have been one of them. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station and died there on 29 June 1916.⁴³ Percy was one of 1,986 admitted to No. 1 CCCS in June and one of 86 to die there that month.⁴⁴ He was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Grave Reference: II. E. 133).⁴⁵

Bailleul is in France, close to the Belgian border. It was occupied on 14 October 1914 and became an important railhead, air depot and hospital centre. Several casualty clearing stations, including No. 1 Canadian, were quartered there for considerable periods. The earliest Commonwealth burials at Bailleul were made in April 1915. An extension was built and burials continued until April 1918, and occurred again in September and after the Armistice, when soldiers' remains were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields.⁴⁶

Percy was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).⁴⁷

In the CCCS chaplains' journal, his mother was identified as his next of kin.⁴⁸ She was living at 16 Seamore [*sic*] Place, Wincheap Street, Canterbury.

It is not clear where his wife was during the war. However, a few months after his death, Jemima remarried, marrying Louis Holden in Canterbury in the summer of 1916.⁴⁹ The year after the war, Percy's eldest son Percy was living with his mother at 5 Providence Row in Wincheap.⁵⁰ His daughter Frances was a resident at St Katherine's Home, Crescent Road, Southbourne, Christchurch, in 1911. It is not clear where she was during and immediately after the war but, in 1925, she married Thomas Busby in East Ashford.

His youngest daughter, Florence, had emigrated to Canada before the war. She was sent to Canada with Dr. Barnardo's organization. She sailed from Le Havre in France to St John's, Newfoundland, on 31 March 1913.⁵¹ From there she planned to travel to the Hazelbrae Barnardo's home in Peterborough, Ontario. Hazelbrae Home began receiving girls brought to Canada by Dr. Barnardo's organization in 1883, but was closed in 1922.⁵² Sadly, Florence probably died on 30 December 1920 of nephritis (kidney disease) at Toronto Western Hospital.⁵³ At the time her address was 50 Peter Street, which was the home of John W. Hobday, manager of Dr Barnardo's Boys' Home. She was only 18 years old. She is buried in Park Lawn Cemetery in Toronto.

The family was obviously not close. In a document prepared in August 1919, Percy's widow Jemima was only able to identify three full siblings for Percy—Stephen, May (probably Frances Mary) and Florence—and was only able to provide addresses for two.⁵⁴ Frances Mary was living in Canterbury with her husband, George Ernest Cox, whom she had married in 1907. Florence was living in Lincoln with her husband, Harry Corthorn Benson, whom she had married in 1903.⁵⁵ She could not identify what became of his other full and half siblings.

In fact, his older brother Stephen had immigrated to Canada. He was a scrap dealer living in Sheffield with his wife and eight children in 1911.⁵⁶ In 1912 he sailed on the *SS Empress of Ireland* from Liverpool, arriving on 16 March 1912 in St John, New Brunswick.⁵⁷ He was heading to Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, intending to become a farmer. His wife, with six children, followed in 1913.⁵⁸ The family moved to Raymore, Saskatchewan.

His brother Charles continued to live in England⁵⁹ and died in Hawkinge, Kent, in December 1942.⁶⁰ His sister Frances Cox probably died in 1964 in Canterbury.⁶¹ Florence Benson probably died in 1953 in Lincoln.⁶² It is not known what became of Percy's sister Kate in later years.

Percy's mother, who had lost three sons in infancy, saw one son immigrate to Canada and lost another son in the Great War, probably died in Canterbury in 1931.⁶³ His wife, whose life with Percy was disrupted by crime and war, probably died in Canterbury in June 1959.⁶⁴

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¹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Percy Carswell, Registration district: Maidstone, Registration district number: 51, Sub-registration district: Maidstone, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 32-34, Piece: 4159

² "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Frances L Carswell, Registration district: Elham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 4, Piece: 1012, Folio: 51, Page: 16

³ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Frances J Marsh, Registration district: East Ashford, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 9, Piece: 703, Folio: 118, Page: 22

⁴ "England, Select Marriages, 1538–1973," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 September 2016), entry for Charles Carswell, FHL film number: 1836199, Reference ID: item 1-4p. 142 #555

⁵ "Canterbury Baptisms," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Mary Ann Carswell, Archive reference: U3/32/1/5

⁶ "Canterbury Baptisms," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Charles Carswell, Archive reference: U3/32/1/6

⁷ "Canterbury Baptisms," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for John Carswell, Archive reference: U3/32/1/6

⁸ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for John Carswell, Registration district: Elham, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 511

⁹ "Canterbury Baptisms," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Stephen James Carswell, Archive reference: U3/32/1/6

¹⁰ "Canterbury Baptisms," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Benjamin John Carswell, Archive reference: U3/184/1/3

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- ¹² "Canterbury Baptisms," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Alfred Carswell, Archive reference: U3/121
- ¹³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Alfred Carswell, Registration district: Elhsm, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 578
- ¹⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Kate Carswell, Registration district: Elham, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 995
- ¹⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Florence Lizzie Carswell, Registration district: Elham, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 1045
- ¹⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Frances May Carswell, Registration district: Elham, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 1025
- ¹⁷ "1871 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2016), entry for Charles Carswell, Registration district: Elham, Sub-registration district: Elham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 1, Household schedule number: 86, Piece: 1018, Folio: 15, Page: 22
- ¹⁸ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Frances L Carswell
- ¹⁹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Charles Carswell, Registration district: Elham, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 588
- ²⁰ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Frances Jane Carswell, Registration district: Elham, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 1864
- ²¹ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Frances J Marsh
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Percy Carswell, Registration district: Canterbury, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 25, Piece: 708, Folio: 16, Page: 8
- ²⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Percy Carswell, Registration district: Edmonton, Inferred county: Middlesex, Volume: 3a, Page: 755
- ²⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 September 2016), entry for Jemima Robins, Registration district: Sheffield, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9c, Page: 530
- ²⁶ "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538–1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 September 2016), entry for Jemima Robins, FHL film number: 6343712, Reference ID: yr 1876-1880 p 126
- ²⁷ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Percy Carswell
- ²⁸ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 September 2016), entry for George Percy Carswell, Registration district: Canterbury, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 901; "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Percy Carswell
- ²⁹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 September 2016), entry for Frances Bertha P M Carswell, Registration district: Tenterden, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 848; "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Percy Carswell

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- ³¹ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 September 2016), entry for Percy Carswell, Registration district: Tonbridge, Sub-registration district: Tonbridge, Enumeration district, institution or vessel: 16, Piece: 758, Folio: 119, Page: 12, Household schedule number: 70
- ³² "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538–1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 September 2016), entry for Jemima Robins; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Bertha Annie M Robins, Registration district: Ecclesall Bierlow, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9c, Page: 520
- ³³ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Frances J Marsh, Registration district: Canterbury, Sub-registration district: Canterbury, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 21, Piece: 794, Folio: 42, Page: 13, Household schedule number: 92
- ³⁴ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Frances Marsh, Registration district: Canterbury, Registration district number: 58, Sub-registration district: Canterbury, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 2, Household schedule number: 253, Piece: 4322
- ³⁵ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Percy Carswell
- ³⁶ "England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1935," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Percy Carswell, Record set: England & Wales, Crime, Prisons & Punishment, 1770-1935, Piece number: 23, Series: MEPO6, Source: Habitual Criminals Register 1912
- ³⁷ "British Newspapers 1710-1953," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Percy Carswell, *Dover Express*, 12 July 1907
- ³⁸ "Habitual Criminals," *Victorian Crime and Punishment* (<http://vcp.e2bn.org/justice/page11571-habitual-criminals.html>; accessed 21 September 2016)
- ³⁹ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Percy Carswell. Unless otherwise noted, all information about his military career comes from this source.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² "UK, WWI War Diaries (France, Belgium and Germany), 1914–1920," Regiment or unit: Queen's Own (Royal West Kent) Regiment, Sub-unit: 8th Battalion, Division: 24th Division, Diary dates: 1915 Aug - 1919 Apr, Piece description: Piece 2213/2: 8 Battalion Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment) (1915 Aug - 1919 Apr), Piece number: 2213
- ⁴³ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Carswell, P.
- ⁴⁴ "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 7 September 2014)
- ⁴⁵ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 20 August 2016), entry for Carswell, P, Service No: G/10063
- ⁴⁶ "Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000047/Bailleul%20Communal%20Cemetery,%20Nord>: accessed 5 August 2015)
- ⁴⁷ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 7 September 2016), entry for Percy Carswell
- ⁴⁸ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 5 July 2016), entry for Carswell, P.

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- ⁵⁰ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Percy Carswell
- ⁵¹ "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 September 2016), entry for Florence Carswell
- ⁵² "Hazel Brae Barnardo Home," *British Home Children in Canada* (<http://canadianbritishhomechildren.weebly.com/hazelbrae-barnardo-home.html>: accessed 8 September 2016)
- ⁵³ *Findagrave* (<http://www.findagrave.com/>: accessed 8 September 2016), entry for Florence Carswell
- ⁵⁴ "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 August 2016), entry for Percy Carswell
- ⁵⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 September 2016), entry for Frances B P M Carswell, Registration district: East Ashford, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 2563
- ⁵⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2016), entry for Stephen Carswell, Registration district: Sheffield, Registration district number: 510, Sub-registration district: Attercliffe, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 33, Piece: 28021
- ⁵⁷ "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 September 2016), entry for Stephen J. Carswell. Other records suggest that he arrived early than 1912, but no evidence to support this has been found and he was recorded in England in the 1911 Census.
- ⁵⁸ "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 8 September 2016), entry for Sarah Carswell
- ⁵⁹ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 September 2016), entry for Charles Carswell, Registration district: Elham, Registration district number: 66, Sub-registration district: Folkestone, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 21, Household schedule number: 304, Piece: 4645
- ⁶⁰ "England & Scotland, Select Cemetery Registers, 1800–2014," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 September 2016), entry for Charles Carswell
- ⁶¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Frances M Cox, Registration district: Canterbury, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 5b, Page: 211
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- ⁶³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry for Frances J Mars?? [*sic*], Registration district: Canterbury, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 511
- ⁶⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 September 2016), entry Jemima Holden, Registration district: Canterbury, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2b, Page: 216