

Private William Coulson[©]
Regimental number: 203386
1st/4th Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry

born: 1898 - died: 27 July 1917

Private William Coulson, born in Usworth, Durham, enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force in Cramlington¹ in July 1915.² He served first with the 3rd Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers (Regimental number: 16/1678).³ At some point he transferred to the 1st/4th Battalion, with which he was serving when he died. This battalion landed at Boulogne, France, on 12 April 1915;⁴ however, it is not known when William joined the Western Front. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 22 July 1917 and died there of gas poisoning⁵ on 28 July⁶. He is buried in Coxyde Military Cemetery (Grave Reference: Plot II, Row L, Grave 14).⁷ His father requested the following inscription for his gravestone:

HE BRAVELY ANSWERED
DUTY'S CALL
AND GAVE HIS LIFE
FOR ONE AND ALL⁸

Coxyde Military Cemetery (located near the village of Koksijde in Belgium) was about 10 kilometres behind the front line in 1917. Commonwealth troops had relieved the French forces in the area and the village was used for rest billets. Although the village was occasionally shelled, the cemetery, which had been started by French troops, was reasonably safe. "It became the most important of the Commonwealth cemeteries on the Belgian coast and was used at night for the burial of the dead brought back from the front line."⁹ There are now just over 1,500 Commonwealth graves from the Great War in the cemetery.

William was probably the son of William and Isabella Coulson, of 14 Long Row, Mount, Wrekenton, County Durham.¹⁰ Both his parents were born in about 1878 in Durham—William in Usworth and Isabella (nee Scott) in Washington.¹¹ They married in Gateshead in 1893¹² and had six children—three sons and three daughters: Thomas (born in 1894),¹³ Matthew Scott (born on 3 February 1895),¹⁴ William (born in 1898),¹⁵ Catherine (born in 1900),¹⁶ Margaret (born in 1904)¹⁷ and Annie (born in 1905).¹⁸

In 1901, the family was living on Front Row in Usworth, where William's father was working underground in a coal miner—he was described as a "Deputy."¹⁹ Ten years later the family was living at 14 Long Row, Mount. William senior was a Deputy Overman and his eldest two sons, Thomas and Matthew, had joined him at the mines.

The UK army register of soldier's effects indicates that William's mother, who received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death, was Elizabeth.²⁰ There is no evidence to suggest that his mother was anybody other than Isabella.

No evidence of his medals was found, but William almost certainly received at least the medals awarded to other soldiers—the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).

William's brother Matthew also served and lost his life in the Great War. Private Matthew Scott Coulson was a private in the Royal Marine Light Infantry (Regimental number: PO/643(S)), based at the Portsmouth Battalion Royal Naval Division.²¹ He died on 13 July 1915 and his commemorated on the Helles Memorial in Turkey.²²

It is not known if William's brother Thomas served, but his parents certainly lost two of their three sons in the Great War.

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¹ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 June 2017), entry for William Coulson

² Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratiuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 June 2017), entry for William Coulson

³ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 June 2017), entry for William Coulson

⁴ "Unit History: King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry," *Forces War Records* (<https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/units/445/kings-own-yorkshire-light-infantry>: accessed 7 April 2017)

⁵ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 30 May 2017), entry for Coulson, W.

⁶ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 30 May 2017), entry for Coulson, W. According to the No. 1 CCCS chaplain, William died on 27 July. However, all other military records indicate 28 July.

⁷ *Ibid.* According to the records of the No. 1 CCCS chaplains, William was buried in Adinkerke Military Cemetery. However, the specific reference for his grave is recorded as Coxyde Military Cemetery.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ "Coxyde Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 2 May 2017)

¹⁰ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 30 May 2017), entry for Coulson, W., Service No: 203386

¹¹ "1901 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 July 2017), entry for William Coulson, Registration district: Chester Le Street, Archive reference: RG13, Piece: 4703, Folio: 135, Page: 59

¹² "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2017), entry for William Coulson, Registration district: Gateshead, Inferred county: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 1074

¹³ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 July 2017) entry for Coulson, Thomas, Registration district: Chester le Street, Volume 10A, Page 531

¹⁴ "UK, Royal Navy and Royal Marine War Graves Roll, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2017), entry for Mathew Scott Coulson

¹⁵ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 July 2017) entry for Coulson, William, Registration district: Chester le Street, Volume 10A, Page 578

¹⁶ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 July 2017) entry for Coulson, Catherine, Registration district: Chester le Street, Volume 10A, Page 585

¹⁷ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 July 2017) entry for Coulson, Margaret, Registration district: Chester le Street, Volume 10A, Page 635

¹⁸ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 10 July 2017) entry for Coulson, Annie, Registration district: Chester le Street, Volume 10A, Page 608

¹⁹ "1901 England, Wales & Scotland Census," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 9 July 2017), entry for William Coulson

²⁰ "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 June 2017), entry for William Coulson

²¹ "UK, Royal Navy and Royal Marine War Graves Roll, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 July 2017), entry for Mathew Scott Coulson

²² "UK, Commonwealth War Graves, 1914–1921 and 1939–1947," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 10 July 2017), entry for Matthew Scott Coulson