

Gunner Percy Henry Card ©
Regimental number: 98315
Royal Field Artillery, 29th Battery, 42nd Brigade

born: 1890 – died: 22 April 1918

Gunner Percy Henry Card was the youngest of his large family and the only son to participate in World War I. He was just 28 years old when he died and like most of his brothers, did not marry.

Percy was the ninth child of Christopher Card and Matilda Weston. Christopher had been born in the spring of 1844 in Calne, Wiltshire, England, to Thomas and Elizabeth Card.¹ Matilda had been born in the fall of 1849 in Bath, Somerset, to Levi and Sarah Weston.² Christopher and Matilda had married on 4 February 1871 in Calne.³ When the 1871 Census was taken just months later, Matilda's widowed mother Elizabeth was living with them.⁴

By the time the 1881 Census was taken, the family was living in Wroughton, Wiltshire, and had grown to include five sons: William Herbert, born in 1872 in Calne; William Edward, born in 1874 in Calne; Charles Levi, born in 1877 in Purton, Wiltshire; Frederick Thomas, born in 1879 in Wroughton, Wiltshire; and four-day-old Frances Ruben, who was at that date, unnamed. Christopher was an agricultural labourer.⁵

By the 1891 Census the family was living in Eisey, Wiltshire. Another four children had been born: Walter Steven, born in 1883 in Highworth, Wiltshire; Sarah Elizabeth, born in 1885 in Eisey; Bertie Albert, born in 1888 in Eisey; and finally, Percy Henry, who had been born in the spring of 1890 in Eisey.⁶ Sadly, two of the children also died during this period: Walter Steven had died at just 6 years old and was buried on 6 May 1889,⁷ and Bertie Albert had died when he was about 1 year old in 1889. On 1 August 1895, Sarah, the only daughter in the family, died at the age of 9 years.⁸

In 1901 most of the family had left home, leaving only Francis, then 19, and Percy, then 11, still residing with Christopher and Matilda at Castle Eaton, Wiltshire. Christopher was a milker and general farm worker, while Francis was a roadman labourer.⁹

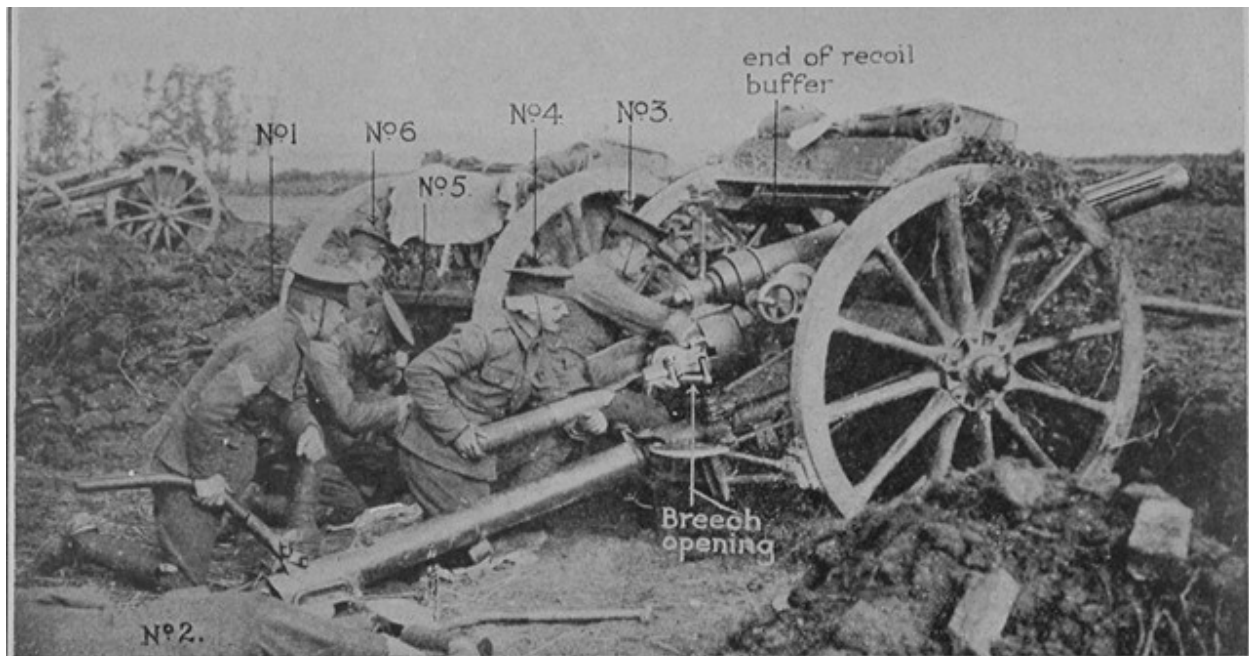
In 1911, the family had moved to Kempford, Fairford, Gloucestershire. Living with Christopher and Matilda were Frederick, Frances and Percy, all of whom were farm labourers.¹⁰

Regrettably, only about 30% of UK service records still exist, due to a fire resulting from a 1940 air raid on the Army Records Office in Walworth, London,¹¹ and it appears that Percy's records were not saved. As a result, certain specifics of his military experience were not obtainable.

Percy entered the war on 19 July 1915 and may have served first in Egypt.¹² He had enlisted at Swindon, Wiltshire, as a gunner with the 29th Battery, 42nd Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery.¹³ A brigade is made up of three batteries; in this case, the 29th, 41st and 45th batteries made up the 42nd Brigade, which was attached to the 3rd Infantry Division.¹⁴ The 3rd Division served on the Western Front in France and Belgium from 1914 to 1918. During this time, it was nicknamed "The Iron Division."¹⁵

The Royal Field Artillery provided artillery support for the British Army and was the largest arm of the artillery. It was responsible for the medium calibre guns and howitzers deployed close to the

front lines and was reasonably mobile.¹⁶ The photo below describes how Percy could have operated an 18-pounder during the war, although it is unclear what his position would have been.



ON THE WESTERN FRONT.

A British 18-pounder quick-firing gun in action.

No. 1 (the sergeant), with his hand on the spade, gives instructions to the rest of the detachment. At the actual moment when this picture was taken No. 2 was lying down. If the gun were actually firing his position would be to the right of the breech. No. 3 is ready to fire the gun; No. 4 has the shell in the correct position for placing in the bore; No. 5 adjusts the fuse and hands the shell to No. 4; No. 6, the farthest away, also prepares the ammunition and hands it to No. 5. The upper portion of the gun has been partially covered in order to conceal it from observers.

Royal Field Artillery

Source: *World War One Photos*¹⁷

On 22 April 1918, Percy suffered life-threatening shrapnel wounds penetrating his chest. He was taken to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station but died and was buried later that same day.¹⁸ A casualty clearing station (CCS) is a military medical facility behind the front lines that is used to treat wounded soldiers. A CCS would usually be located just beyond the range of enemy artillery and often near transportation facilities (e.g., a railway). The CCS receives battlefield casualties from regimental aid posts located in the combat zone. Casualties that cannot be adequately treated in the CCS are stabilized there before being transported to a field hospital or military hospital.¹⁹

Percy was buried in Pernes British Cemetery, Plot 1, Row D, Grave 16.²⁰ Pernes British Cemetery was not opened until April 1918, when the 1st and 4th Canadian CCS pulled back to Pernes, driven back by the German advance in Flanders. There are 1,098 First World War burials in Pernes.²¹



Photo of grave stone of P. H. Card
Source: *Find a Grave* (www.findagrave.com)

Christopher was the sole legatee of Percy's estate, receiving his outstanding pay and a war gratuity of £17. The war gratuity was introduced in December 1918 as a payment to be made to those men who had served in WW I for a period of at least six months, or for home service for any length of time if the man had served overseas.²² Percy was posthumously awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918), the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the 1915 Star (for service in an operational theatre in 1915).²³

Christopher passed away June 1922 in Swindon, Wiltshire,²⁴ and Matilda died four years later in the last quarter of 1926 in Cirencester, Gloucestershire.²⁵

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Ancestry (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Matilda Weston, FHL film number: 1526221

³ "Wiltshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1916," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Christopher Card

⁴ "1871 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Christopher Card, Registration district: Calne, Sub-registration district: Calne, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 8, Household schedule number: 119, Piece: 1902, Folio: 27

⁵ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Christopher Card, Registration district: Highworth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 9, Piece: 2017, Folio: 5, Page: 3

⁶ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Christopher Card, Registration district: Cricklade, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 3, Piece: 1588, Folio: 36

⁷ "Wiltshire, England, Deaths and Burials, 1813–1916," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Walter Stephen Card, Parish: Castle Eaton, Phillimore Ecclesiastical Parish: 12039

⁸ "Wiltshire, England, Deaths and Burials, 1813–1916," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Sarah Elizabeth Card, Parish: Castle Eaton, Phillimore Ecclesiastical Parish: 12039

⁹ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Christopher Card, Registration district: Swindon, Sub-registration district: Highworth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 7, Piece: 1903, Folio: 93, Page: 3, Household schedule number: 10

¹⁰ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Christopher Card, Registration district: Cirencester, Registration district number: 329, Sub-registration district: Fairford, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 8, Household schedule number: 77, Piece: 15456

¹¹ "How to research a soldier," *The Long, Long Trail, The British Army in the Great War of 1914–1918* (<http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/soldiers/how-to-research-a-soldier/>: accessed 30 May 2017)

¹² "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Percy H Card

¹³ "UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Percy Henry Card

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- ¹⁴ "42nd Brigade Royal Field Artillery," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/42nd_Brigade_Royal_Field_Artillery): accessed 14 March 2019)
- ¹⁵ "3rd Division (United Kingdom)," *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3rd_Division_\(United_Kingdom\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3rd_Division_(United_Kingdom))): accessed 14 March 2019)
- ¹⁶ "Unit History: Royal Field Artillery," *Forces War Records* (<https://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/units/5000/royal-field-artillery/>): accessed 14 March 2019)
- ¹⁷ "Royal Field Artillery," *World War One Photos* (<http://www.ww1photos.com/RFA.html>): accessed 14 March 2019)
- ¹⁸ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Card, P.
- ¹⁹ "Casualty Clearing Station," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualty_Clearing_Station): accessed 4 February 2017)
- ²⁰ Ibid. Also, "Global, Find a Grave Index for Burials at Sea and other Select Burial Locations, 1300s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca): accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Gunner Percy Henry Card
- ²¹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org): accessed 6 October 2017), entry for Pernes British Cemetery
- ²² "What was the war gratuity?" *The war gratuities of WWI* (<https://wargratiuity.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/what-was-the-war-gratuity/>): accessed 6 October 2017)
- ²³ "UK, WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca): accessed 9 August 2017), entry for 2 Lieut. Gordon A. F. Correct?
- ²⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca): accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Christopher Card, Registration district: Swindon, Inferred county: Wiltshire, Volume: 5a, Page: 4
- ²⁵ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.ca): accessed 14 March 2019), entry for Matilda Card, Registration district: Cirencester, Inferred county: Gloucestershire, Volume: 6a, Page: 503